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ABSTRACT

The quality of the academic standards in America's public schools is one of the pressing issues on the minds of parents and the public. This document, the third annual report by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), reports on how many states are committed to setting common academic standards and analyzes the quality of the standards against AFT criteria. It also reports on states' intentions to assess whether students are meeting the standards, to provide extra academic help to students who are not meeting the standards, and to attach meaningful consequences to the standards. Findings are based on interviews with officials and analysis of documents from the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Section 1 describes the AFT criteria for judging state reforms. Section 2 presents national figures regarding the quality of state standards, the work under way on assessments, and the plans for student incentives linked to the standards. Charts with state-by-state data on major issues described in section 1 are included. Section 3 offers recommendations to states for ensuring successful reforms. The fourth section elaborates on findings for each state, discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each state's standards, and describes their plans for assessment, student incentives, and academic intervention. The final section contains official state responses to the report. Some major findings include the following: (1) Every state except Iowa is setting common academic standards for its students, and most consider standards a work in progress; (2) over the course of the year the quality of state standards has improved; and (3) most states, however, still need to improve some of their standards. (LMI)

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MAKING STANDARDS MATTER 1997

AN ANNUAL FIFTY-STATE REPORT ON EFFORTS TO RAISE ACADEMIC STANDARDS

ED 410 661

EA 028 557

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AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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In the fall of 1995, the AFT launched Responsibility, Respect, Results: Lessons for Life, a national campaign for high standards of student conduct and achievement. The centerpiece of the campaign is our ***Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for Learning,*** *which has been endorsed by school boards, state legislators, city councils, business and community groups, and hundreds of citizens across the country. The campaign's aim is to spur a national movement of citizens and educators behind these two fundamental school reforms. Other reforms* ***may*** *work. Standards for student behavior and student achievement* ***do*** *work. Truly, no other reforms* ***can*** *work without them.*

Making Standards Matter *reports on the quality of the academic standards in the states and the policies that need to be in place to support teachers and schools as they work to help students reach high standards. Additional AFT materials on academic standards are described on pages 168-9.*

A BILL OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LEARNING

Standards of Conduct, Standards for Achievement

The traditional mission of our public schools has been to prepare our nation's young people for equal and responsible citizenship and productive adulthood. Today, we reaffirm that mission by remembering that democratic citizenship and productive adulthood begin with standards of conduct and standards for achievement in our schools. Other education reforms *may* work; high standards of conduct and achievement *do* work—and nothing else can work without them.

Recognizing that rights carry responsibilities, we declare that:

1. All students and school staff have a right to schools that are safe, orderly and drug free.

2. All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts and schools that have clear discipline codes with fair and consistently enforced consequences for misbehavior.

3. All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts that have alternative educational placements for violent or chronically disruptive students.

4. All students and school staff have a right to be treated with courtesy and respect.

5. All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts, schools and classrooms that have clearly stated and rigorous academic standards.

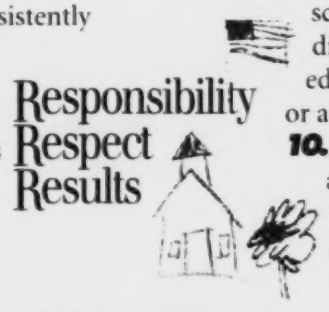
6. All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in well-equipped schools that have the instructional materials needed to carry out a rigorous academic program.

7. All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in schools where teachers know their subject matter and how to teach it.

8. All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts, schools and classrooms where high grades stand for high achievement and promotion is earned.

9. All students and school staff have a right to learn and work in school districts and schools where getting a high school diploma means having the knowledge and skills essential for college or a good job.

10. All students and school staff have a right to be supported by parents, the community, public officials and business in their efforts to uphold high standards of conduct and achievement.



MAKING **STANDARDS** MATTER **1997**

AN ANNUAL FIFTY-STATE REPORT ON EFFORTS TO RAISE ACADEMIC STANDARDS

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

The **American Federation of Teachers** (AFT) represents the professional, economic and social concerns of more than 940,000 members, primarily elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty and other school employees. The AFT is committed to helping its members bring excellence to America's classrooms and full professional status to their work.

Sandra Feldman, *AFT President*

Edward J. McElroy, *AFT Secretary-Treasurer*

Ruth Wattenberg, *Director,* Educational Issues Department

■■■

Making Standards Matter 1997 is a publication of the AFT Educational Issues Department. The department provides members with research, publications, technical assistance and training programs related to their professional concerns.

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This report is the result of many months of intensive work by the individuals listed above and by several others whose contributions deserve to be mentioned. We'd like to thank Lydia Ellis for her time, energy, and her superior organizational skills. Without her, this project wouldn't have gone as smoothly as it did. Thanks also to other staff in the AFT Educational Issues Department who contributed to this effort. We'd like to thank staff of the AFT Public Affairs and Editorial departments for making the report accessible to AFT members and the broader public. Special thanks to Mary Boyd in the AFT Editorial Department for her thorough copy editing. And last, but not least, thanks to Andy Bornstein for his quality design work.

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ILLUSTRATIONS: BRU ASSOCIATES

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Executive Summary

The quality of the academic standards in America's schools is one of the most pressing issues on the minds of parents and the public. It is also something that teachers and others who work in schools care deeply about. *Making Standards Matter* is an annual report by the American Federation of Teachers that analyzes the quality of the academic standards in the fifty states and monitors the extent to which those standards can drive major changes in the schools.

We first issued *Making Standards Matter* in the summer of 1995. The good news then was that nearly every state was working to set common academic standards for their students. But good intentions were not necessarily resulting in strong standards. We saw a lot of activity between 1995 and 1996, but the quality of the standards did not significantly improve in the states. We made it clear in our report last year that most states had more work to do to strengthen their standards, and we cautioned that the failure of states to attach rewards, consequences, and interventions to their standards would severely diminish their effectiveness.

Much work has taken place over the course of the year, and that work is beginning to pay off in some states. In this edition of *Making Standards Matter*, we reveal those states that have made the greatest progress and those that still have more work to do. We also report on states' intentions to assess whether students are meeting the standards, to provide extra academic help to students who are not meeting the standards, and to attach meaningful consequences to the standards so that students and others take them seriously. Without these companion pieces, we doubt that even the best standards will have much of an impact on student achievement.

Following are our major findings and our recommendations for moving forward. These items are elaborated on in Sections II and III of this report.

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Major Findings

- **The commitment to standards-based reform remains very strong in the states. Every state except Iowa is setting common academic standards for its students and most consider standards a work in progress.**
- **Over the course of the year the quality of state standards has improved. Fourteen states produced new standards that are stronger than the versions we reviewed last year, and eight of those states made improvements in two or more subjects.**
- **Most states still need to improve some of their standards in order to provide the basis for a common core of learning.**
- **States continue to have more difficulty setting strong standards in English and social studies than in math and science.**
- **Some state standards are "exemplary" and should be considered models for other states to emulate.**
- **All but a few states will develop assessments to measure whether their students are meeting the state standards, but the standards are not strong enough in most states to provide a solid foundation for the assessments.**
- **More states recognize the need for internationally competitive standards, but most lack the resources to determine whether their standards are world class.**
- **Many states are looking at the national tests proposed by the Clinton administration as an opportunity to benchmark their expectations to a national standard.**
- **Only seven states are seeking to end social promotion by requiring students to meet the state standards before being promoted into certain grades (up from four last year).**
- **Only 13 states will have high school graduation exams based on 10th-grade standards or higher.**
- **Only 13 states require and fund intervention programs to help low-performing students reach the state standards (up from 10 last year).**

Recommendations for Moving Forward

1. **States need to be encouraged to revise and improve their academic standards.**
2. **States need help to make sure their standards are rigorous and internationally competitive.**
3. **States should draw on the best work of other states.**
4. **States should supplement their standards with curriculum guides or frameworks that provide clearer guidance to districts and schools without sacrificing local control.**
5. **States need to make sure their assessments are based on strong standards.**
6. **States need help determining whether their standards and assessments are aligned.**
7. **States should establish plans for phasing in incentives and consequences, otherwise students will not take the standards seriously.**
8. **States must provide extra help to students who are not meeting the standards.**

Introduction

Over the past several years, one issue has come to dominate the national discussion about improving schools more than any other: **academic standards**. The idea is to set clear standards for what we want students to learn and to use those standards to drive other changes in the system.

This may sound like common sense, but the idea is a relatively new one in this country. Some of our teachers, schools, and communities have always had high expectations for their children, but until recently, there has been little effort at the national, state, or local levels to set clear, measurable standards for what all students in elementary and secondary schools should know and be able to do in the core academic subjects. We haven't organized our curriculum around a clearly defined set of expectations, nor have we developed assessment systems that measure whether students are meeting rigorous, publicly available standards.

The result, not surprisingly, is that students have been learning different things from school to school, district to district, and state to state, and our expectations for them have not been high enough. Some children get exposed to rigorous courses; others don't. Some students get good grades only if they master challenging material; others get good grades and promotions no matter what they do. Typically, students get passed from grade to grade regardless of how much they learn, and many graduate not realizing how unprepared they are. Teachers who try to uphold high academic standards with tough grading and promotion policies are often pressured by administrators, parents, and students to ease up. In the absence of clear standards, they are powerless.

Without a system of standards, the negative effects of student mobility are compounded. One-fifth of students move from school to school each year, and in low-income neighborhoods the rates are much higher. With no common standards in place, mobile students usually arrive in their new classrooms way behind or ahead of the other students, which places a considerable strain on the teacher, the student, and the entire class. A significant amount of class time is spent just trying to figure out what the new students have learned at their previous schools.

Another consequence of our lack of clear standards is that components of the system that should be well aligned and working together—curriculum, assessment, teacher education, professional development—are largely disconnected. Most of the assessments students take over the course of their school careers are not directly tied to the curriculum they are studying. So they are being tested, but not necessarily on what they have been learning in school. And most training and professional development programs for teachers and other school staff also lack a focus and a clear connection to the curriculum.

The hope of the standards movement is that we can turn all of these things around. With clear and rigorous standards to guide us, we can focus all our

energies and resources on improving the academic performance of our students. We can help guarantee that all children, regardless of background or neighborhood, will be exposed to a rigorous academic curriculum throughout their educational careers. We can hold students to much higher standards than they have been expected to meet in the past. We can ensure that the standards and curriculum will be common enough across schools and districts to reduce the problems and frustrations of student mobility. We can make the necessary resources and assistance available to those students in danger of failing. And we can put an end to the destructive, deceiving practice of social promotion. *It all starts with a strong set of standards.*

■■■

Making Standards Matter is an effort to assess how far our work on standards has progressed over the years and how much further we have to go to achieve success. We first issued this report in the summer of 1995. Until then, there had been no comprehensive report on education standards in the states. The focus of our report then was on the quality of state standards and the pieces that need to be in place to help students reach those standards. That continues to be the focus of *Making Standards Matter* today.

Although other reports have been produced over the last year or two discussing standards-based reforms in the states, our report is the only one we know of that analyzes the *quality* of the academic standards in *every* state. We look at the standards through a particular lens. As teachers, we want to be sure that the standards are clear and specific enough to guide what we do in schools. We also want to be sure that the standards will be applied consistently so that no students get left behind.

Since we know that standards alone will not get us very far, we also ask states a number of questions about their plans for assessing the standards and for attaching consequences to those assessments. Will states develop assessments to measure the standards in all four core subjects? Will students be required to meet the standards in order to be promoted into certain grades and in order to graduate? Will low-performing students be provided with extra academic help?

In putting this report together, we interviewed officials and analyzed standards and curriculum documents from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and, for the first time in this report, Puerto Rico. Determining the clarity and quality of the standards in each state required the careful analysis of hundreds of documents. The rest of the data comes from our interviews with state officials.

As a courtesy to states, we sent our draft findings to each state superintendent and deputy superintendent in advance of publication. We asked them to make us aware of any inaccuracies or inconsistencies so that we could make the necessary changes. We also offered to publish state responses in our report as we have done every year. We consider this an important way to develop the kind of ongoing dialogue that will lead to changes and improvements over time. Thirty-five states sent publishable letters this year. We heard from 15 additional states, but these were handwritten notes that were not easily reproducible.

This report consists of five major sections. All of the issues we explore and the questions we answer about the states are explained in **Section I,** *AFT's Criteria for Judging State Reforms.* We strongly recommend that readers examine these criteria before trying to understand our overall findings or our judgments about any particular state. **Section II,** *How the States Measure Up,* contains the major findings from our research. Here we present statistics regarding the quality of state standards nationwide, the work under way on assessments, and the plans for student incentives linked to the standards. In **Section III,** *Recommendations for Moving Forward,* we pull out the most critical issues from all of the data and offer suggestions for how states can resolve the problems they face and ensure the success of their reforms.

The final two sections of the report contain specific information on each state. In **Section IV,** readers will find a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each state's standards as well as a report of their plans for assessment, student incentives, and academic intervention. **Section V** contains the official responses we received from states after sending them our criteria and draft findings. In some cases, we changed our findings based on new information provided by the states in their letters. In these instances, we highlight the relevant points in the state letters.

I. AFT's Criteria for Judging State Reforms

The American Federation of Teachers believes that the success of school reforms in the states will depend in large part on the quality of the academic standards states set for their children and also on how seriously those standards are taken by everyone connected with the schools. This report is designed to highlight some of the characteristics of high-quality standards and of systems that support such standards. We don't claim to have covered every important question that needs to be asked, but we do feel that each of the issues we raise here is crucial for states to address.

What follows are the specific criteria we use to analyze states' reform efforts. We ask separate questions about standards, assessments, and the extent to which the standards will "count." It is very difficult to understand the conclusions we reach about any particular state without first reading this section.

Standards

Issue 1: Does the state have or is it in the process of developing standards in the four core academic subjects?

What are students expected to learn in each of the core academic subjects? This question is at the heart of what a good set of achievement standards should convey. Here we are interested in showing which states are committed to setting common academic standards for their students in the four core academic disciplines—English, math, science, and social studies. The AFT believes that a full core academic curriculum should also include the arts and foreign languages, but in this report we limit our review to the four core subjects most states have taken up first.

In our view, it is not enough for state standards to simply touch upon or reference the disciplines. Each discipline represents a body of knowledge and a "disciplined" way of thinking that have evolved over centuries. To be complete, a set of standards must embody the knowledge and habits of mind essential to each of the core subjects, and in our opinion, this cannot be accomplished by trying to fit disciplinary knowledge into broad over-arching categories such as "critical thinking" and "problem solving." If standards setters ignore or significantly blur disciplinary boundaries, there is a real danger that the integrity of the disciplines—the essential

knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that make each subject unique—will get lost.

Although there can be real value in interdisciplinary study, we believe this should be a pedagogical decision rather than a broad policy imperative shaped by state standards. In other words, the standards themselves should not be interdisciplinary. Standards are meant to define what is essential for students to learn. They should not dictate how that material should be taught. Those decisions are best left to the professionals in the schools.

How We Made Our Judgment

This criterion was easy to assess. We simply wanted to know which states have standards documents, regardless of what they are called (standards, frameworks, objectives, etc.), that describe what students should know and be able to do in each of the core academic subjects. States that have standards documents (or are planning to develop them) in each of the core academic subjects receive credit in this category. Our intention with this criterion is not to judge the quality of the standards, but to give states credit for having public standards documents focused on the four core disciplines. Qualitative judgments are discussed in Issue 2.

Since many states are in the process of developing standards, we are giving credit to those that intend to develop them in each of the core subjects, even if they only have drafts available in a few subjects. In the *State-by-State Analysis* section of this report, we note which standards documents are completed, which are in draft form, and which are planned but not yet available for review.

Issue 2: Are the standards clear and specific enough to provide the basis for a common core curriculum?

Standards should be the glue that holds the various components of the educational system together. They should be the foundation for the work of curriculum and assessment developers; they should guide textbook publishers and others who develop instructional materials; and they should provide a clear focus for professional development and preservice training for all school staff. Standards should also serve another very important function. They should provide the foundation for ensuring that all students, whether in poor or wealthy districts, are exposed to a rich, challenging curriculum and held to high expectations for achievement. This gets to the heart of what it means to bring equity and excellence to our schools.

These goals are jeopardized if standards are not clear and specific about what students should learn. Standards that are too broadly stated or too vague will engender too much variation across districts and schools, reducing the chances that all students within the state will have access to a common core of knowledge and skills. And all too often, it is the children in poorer communities who are the victims of vague standards and watered-down curricula. Insufficiently clear and specific standards also make it difficult to ensure that curriculum, assessment, and professional development are well aligned. The more broad and vague the standards, the greater the chance of widely differing interpretations by people across the state. The likely result is less, rather than greater, alignment in the system and the possibility that lower levels of achievement will be tolerated.

There is another reason why clear and specific standards are important. It is estimated that one-fifth of all school-age children move from school to school each year. Over one-third of students transfer in and out of schools in high-poverty areas. Transient students usually arrive in new schools either way behind or ahead of their classmates because of the lack of a consistent curriculum and common expectations. Their new teachers then have to determine how much the new students know relative to the rest of the class. It is a frustrating process for the teacher and the entire class, and a significant amount of instructional time is lost. If states develop standards that are very clear about what students should learn each year, the transition for those mobile students—and the challenge to their new teachers—could be significantly eased.

How We Made Our Judgment

In looking at each state's standards documents, we had to determine whether there was enough information about what students should learn to provide the basis for a "common core curriculum" and thereby serve the functions described above. There is no perfect formula for this—it requires a series of judgment calls. In our view, a core curriculum should probably take up somewhere between 60 and 80 percent of the academic curriculum, leaving the flexibility for districts, schools, and

teachers to fill in the remaining 20 to 40 percent. States that organize their standards grade by grade and thoroughly ground their standards in content probably do the best job of specifying what students should learn and when they should learn it. But some states that do not have grade-by-grade expectations also provide enough information and present it clearly enough in their standards to meet our criterion.

Following are five of the qualities we look for in order to determine whether a set of standards meets our "common core" criterion:

1) Standards must define in every grade or for selected clusters of grades the common content and skills students should learn in each subject. No matter how clear and specific standards may be, if they do not indicate the various ages or grades by which time students should be expected to master the material, they are not very useful. That is the first thing we look for in a standards document—references to grade levels or clusters of grades.

2) Standards must be detailed and comprehensive enough to lead to a common core curriculum. As mentioned earlier, strong standards should provide the basis for 60 to 80 percent of the academic curriculum. In other words, they must provide clear guidance to teachers, curriculum and assessment developers, textbook publishers, and others, such that one person's interpretation of the core knowledge and skills students should learn in a particular grade level or cluster of grades wouldn't be very different from someone else's. To accomplish this, standards need to reflect the breadth and depth of each subject area.

We do not attempt to judge the overall quality or rigor of the content covered in each state. In other words, we do not try to determine whether the 9th-grade algebra standards in a given state should have been covered in the 8th grade. However, we do point out obvious holes or weaknesses in each subject. For example, math standards that don't adequately address algebra in any grade, or social studies standards that don't substantially cover history and civics, or English standards that don't focus enough attention on grammar or literature will not measure up to our criteria. It is also not enough to make a laundry list of concepts and skills in order to "cover" everything. That approach will result in an unmanageable and often fragmented set of expectations that fails to provide coherent guidance as to what is most important for students to learn.

Strong standards provide both detail and focus. They break down broad categories and concepts and elaborate on the underlying content and skills. They also tend to use smaller grade clusters (e.g., K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-10, 11-12) or provide separate standards for every grade. A strong set of standards will also avoid repeating the exact same standards from grade to grade or from grade cluster to grade cluster. If certain skills or knowledge should be continually developed over the grades, the standards should make it clear what constitutes adequate progress or development for particular grades or grade clusters. In other words, strong standards show how knowledge and skills build and develop over the years.

3) Standards must be firmly rooted in the content of the subject area. This is extremely important. It is not enough for standards to emphasize the skills students should learn and leave the content to local discretion. Whether it is social studies, science, math, or English, a solid education is built on knowledge. Students who don't acquire substantial content knowledge in school will suffer later, both in their personal lives and in their careers. Furthermore, it is impossible to successfully use a skill, say scientific reasoning, without learning some **science** concepts and content. That's why things like the periodic table, laws of gravity and motion, conductivity, and heredity have to be addressed in science standards. Other examples:

- It is inadequate for a **social studies** standard to state that students should be able to "apply knowledge of historical events" without specifying which events and periods of history are most significant and without clearly defining what is most important about those periods or events for students to understand. The point here is not to "cover" everything, but rather to define a common core.
- It is inadequate for a **math** standard to state that students should learn to "apply geometric rules and formulas in real-world situations." Does this mean students should know how to find the perimeter of a square, the area of a circle, apply the Pythagorean theorem, or all of these?

■ It is inadequate for an **English** standard to state that students should "read a variety of genres" without specifying which genres and giving some examples of works, authors, or literary traditions. It is also important to give more guidance regarding the sophistication and level of complexity of the literature students should be reading at a given grade level.

4) Standards must be clear and explicit about the content students are expected to learn. It is not enough to provide selected details of the content students should learn or the level of performance they should achieve and then claim these are only "models" or "examples" because this implies that other ideas of content or performances are just as acceptable. We have noticed this practice in some states that have broad standards, such as those referenced in #3 above. To say that the details and content that follow such standards are "just some of the many ways the standard can be reached" should raise some questions and concerns with readers. For example, in the social studies standard mentioned above, the lack of clear and explicit language could be interpreted to mean that learning about Icelandic history is just as important and appropriate as learning about American history. Chances are, this is not what the state intends. But the use of standards like this could lead to widely different curricula and expectations in districts and schools across a given state. If this is the result, then why develop standards at all?

There is another important issue here as well. If the real meat of the standards is provided for illustrative purposes only, then what will be covered on the state assessments? One possibility is that the assessments will follow the lead of the standards and ignore or minimize the content of the subject areas, which would mean that students are not expected to learn any particular content at all. We would question the integrity and the value of such assessments. Another possibility is that the assessments will build in specific content knowledge that is not necessarily conveyed in the standards. In the latter case, teachers, students, parents, and others will be left to guess which content is most important, and if they guess wrong, test scores will suffer. Not only is that counterproductive, it is unfair to the students.

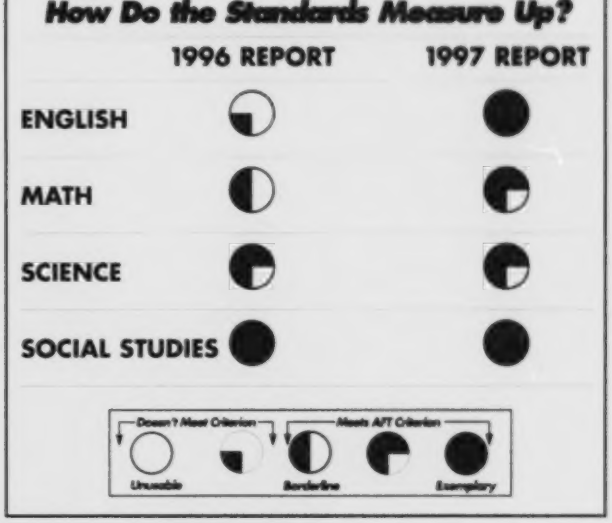
5) Standards that are organized on a course by course basis in high school must define the core courses that all students are expected to take. By the time they graduate, all students should have learned a common core of content and skills in each subject, and that core should be specified in the standards at least part-way through high school. A number of states set course-by-course standards in high school rather than specifying what students should learn by the end of certain grades. Even though these standards may be very clear and specific about the content of the courses, if they leave it completely up to schools or students to select which courses should be taken, they are failing to establish a common core. It is not enough for states to require a certain *number* of courses or credits for graduation. States with course-by-course standards must make clear *which* courses all students have to take. This does not mean schools and students should be locked into taking these courses in a particular order or in a particular year. But the required courses should be clear to all.

Subject-by-Subject Analysis

In preparing this report, we followed a pattern of work similar to previous years. We collected new drafts of existing core subject area standards from the 50 states and the District of Columbia and compared them with the drafts we analyzed for our 1996 report. We have also added Puerto Rico to the analysis this year.

We examined each set of standards using the principles discussed earlier, and we made separate judgments for each subject. Because there is considerable variation in the quality of the standards from subject to subject in some states, we show how each of the four subject areas measures up to our criteria. In the *State-by-State Analysis* section, we provide more details, including a scale that allows us to provide more information than a simple pass or fail for each subject. Following is a description of the different categories on that scale.

This graphic appears on each state page in Section IV of this report. It is designed to indicate more precisely than a simple "pass/fail" rating how each subject of a state's standards measures up to the AFT "common core" criterion. We include both 1996 and 1997 data in order to show how the standards in each state have changed over the past year.



"Doesn't Meet AFT Common Core Criterion"

We have separated those standards that fail to meet our "common core" criterion into two categories. The category at the bottom of the scale (represented by ○) is reserved for state documents that make no mention at all of grade levels or grade clusters. We think it is important to separate those from the rest because we don't think they should be considered standards. The fact is, they won't be useful to anyone if they do not indicate the various grades by which time students should be expected to learn the material.

The second category (represented by ◔) denotes all of the standards documents that reference grade levels or clusters, but for one or more of the reasons described earlier, they don't meet the AFT "common core" criterion. These documents either don't provide enough detail, are too light on content, provide only "models" but no explicit standards, or they don't establish a common core in high school. On the state pages, we provide more elaboration on these points as necessary.

"Meets AFT Common Core Criterion"

We have separated standards that meet our "common core" criterion into three categories to show the range of quality. "Borderline" cases (represented by ◐) are those documents that meet our criterion, but only by a narrow margin. Last year, recognizing that states were still in the early stages of their work, we decided to lean toward the side of generosity, giving credit to those state documents that came close to providing the appropriate level of information. We understand that states need time to share ideas and to learn from each other in order to produce the best work possible, so we have decided to continue to give credit to these borderline cases this year. Borderline standards are stronger than those that don't meet our criterion, and they deserve to be recognized for this. But if they are going to be powerful levers for raising student achievement, these standards need to be improved. *In future editions of this report, we plan to make tougher judgments and borderline standards will no longer be satisfactory.*

Aside from the borderline cases, the standards documents that meet our criterion (represented by ◔) are, in our view, strong enough to provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state. They embody the qualities of clarity, content, and precision described earlier, and they should be useful and informative to teachers, parents, and others who will be looking at them. This is not to say that all of these standards are of equal quality—they are not. Some states and some standards documents clearly stand out above the rest, and they deserve to be noted. We refer to these cases as "exemplary." These standards are represented by "●" on the scale.

The best standards are those that combine rich content and skills in a grade-by-grade format with precision, efficiency, and coherence. Why is this the case? In our view, the chances are much better that a strong common core curriculum will result from such standards. And as we discussed earlier, a common core will increase the likelihood that all students are exposed to rigorous curriculum; that students who move from school to school will have studied a consistent curriculum so they won't be too far behind their new classmates; and that the curriculum, assessments, textbooks, and other elements of the system are *well aligned.*

There are some states that have developed impressive standards without breaking them down grade by grade but rather by organizing them into

clusters of grades. We call attention to those cases as well. In each case, these documents are elaborated on in the *State-by-State Analysis* section. In our opinion, each state, even the ones whose standards presently meet our criterion, should strive to make its standards as clear and effective as the "exemplary" ones we have highlighted.

Assessments

Issue: Does or will the state have an assessment system aligned with the standards? If so, will the state assess students in all four core subjects and in each of the three grade spans?

One of the most important purposes of setting standards at the state level is to ensure that all students are being offered a challenging curriculum and that their performance is being judged according to consistently high expectations. Standards that are interpreted differently or that are inconsistently applied from district to district will not serve this function. This is why we stress the importance of standards that are clear and specific.

But even the most specific set of standards can be applied unevenly from district to district if the responsibility for measuring student progress is solely a local one. Why? Because the assessments are what ultimately determine how rigorously a given set of standards is applied. The most rigorous set of standards could be weakened significantly by lax assessments, by tough assessments that allow very low pass scores, or by assessments that do not concentrate on the central content of the standards. There may even be an incentive for districts to do this so that more of their students "meet the state standards."

In our view, states that take responsibility for developing assessments aligned with their standards will do the best job of monitoring whether those standards are being consistently applied across the state. States that abdicate their responsibility and leave the task of assessment completely up to districts are not in a position to ensure consistency.

Moreover, developing a good assessment system is expensive, and most districts do not have the expertise or funds to do this well. It is unfair and unrealistic for states to expect cash-strapped districts to develop their own assessments when they need to be taking a serious look at how best to deploy their resources in helping students reach higher levels of achievement. It is also wasteful. Why should hundreds of districts in a state each have to go through the same exercise and expense of creating their own comprehensive assessment systems?

How We Made Our Judgments

Whereas our analysis of state standards involved collecting documents and judging their quality, our investigation of assessments was conducted through interviews of state officials only. We have not attempted to collect and analyze state tests nor have we attempted to verify state assertions about the alignment of their assessments with their standards. What we have done is established some basic principles that an effective state assessment system should follow and we have asked states whether their assessments follow those principles.

We first asked each state if it has or will have an assessment system measuring whether or not students in all districts are meeting the standards. To receive credit, states must have (or plan to have) assessments that are clearly linked to their standards, and they must assess (or plan to assess) students in every district in the state. Some states may monitor student progress by testing samples of students in each district; others will assess every student. Either approach will satisfy this criterion, but we believe that states that test all students are in a much better position to take the next essential step—making student achievement count. (In future editions of this report, we will only give credit to states that are moving to make individual student achievement count.)

Next, we wanted to find out how many of the states will have assessments aligned with the standards in all four core subjects. We argued earlier that it is very important for states to set standards in each of the core disciplines; it is just as important to assess students in each of those subjects. Otherwise, the standards will not be taken seriously. When states set standards in all core subjects but only assess students in some of them, the message, whether they like it or not, is that only certain subjects are important enough to measure. There is no better way to diminish the importance of state science standards, for example, than to say progress toward the standards won't be measured. We believe

that all core subjects need to be assessed statewide if raising student achievement in these subjects is the primary goal. (Note: In our view, English assessments must cover both reading and writing to be complete. A state that only has writing assessments or only reading assessments aligned with its standards will not get credit for aligned assessments in English.)

For an assessment system to be most effective, students should be tested in each of the core subjects at several key points in their educational careers. This will help teachers and others monitor student progress through the grades. In this year's report, we were interested in finding out which states will have assessments aligned with the standards in each subject at least once in each grade span (elementary, middle, high school). States that only assess students in one grade span, high school for example, are not providing elementary and middle school teachers and parents with information they desperately need. And the result is that most of the pressure and responsibility for helping students reach the standards falls on high school teachers. The same problems occur when assessments linked to the standards are only given in elementary school or middle school.

Having said this, we want to make it clear that we understand the costs and complexities involved in developing assessments. We understand the need in some states to begin with a few subjects and phase in assessments in the other subjects or other grades over time. That is why we give credit to states that plan to develop assessments in the future. But we only give credit for planned assessments if the proper authority in the state has signed off on that plan. In other words, if the state official or state body with final authority—be it the legislature, board of education, governor, or superintendent—has determined that assessments will be developed in certain subjects and grades, we give the state credit in our report even if work has not yet begun. If the decision is still pending in the legislature or elsewhere, we do not give formal credit but we will mention that the issue is being considered by the state.

Many states are using norm-referenced, commercially developed standardized tests as part of their assessment programs. In most of these cases, there is no claim made that these tests are aligned with the state standards. In several cases, however, this claim *is* made. Some states have engaged in fairly elaborate exercises to determine that these tests are aligned to their standards. Other states have relied on the testing companies to tell them. In our view, simply choosing an off-the-shelf test that "best reflects" the state standards does not ensure alignment. But since we are not able to verify or disprove claims of alignment in this report, we give credit to states that make this claim while making it clear that the state is using standardized tests.

Benchmarking

Issue: Has the state taken steps to benchmark its standards and assessments against the academic expectations of other high-achieving countries?

Much of the discussion about education standards in recent years has focused on the need to bring American students up to "world-class" levels of achievement. As rhetorical as this phrase has become, it is extremely important that we not lose sight of what it means. It doesn't mean making standards a bit more rigorous than they were before. It doesn't mean asking teachers or parents what they think "world-class" performance is. And it doesn't mean basing our standards on the work of national standards-setting organizations who themselves have not adequately defined world-class achievement.

Setting world-class standards should mean making sure American students are asked to meet expectations as demanding as those set for students in other high-achieving countries. For several years, we have asked state officials what steps they had taken (or planned to take) to benchmark their standards and assessments to the academic expectations in other high-achieving countries. Although we have noticed heightened awareness in states regarding the importance of international benchmarking and even an increased desire to do something about it, there continues to be a paucity of resources and ideas for getting it done.

How We Made Our Judgment

While the technology and methodology for benchmarking state standards and assessments to the best in the world remains unrefined, there are some things states can do to move forward. Those

responsible for developing standards and assessments can look at the academic expectations in other countries with high-achieving students. This requires placing American standards side by side with standards from other countries whose students are doing well and seeing how we measure up. It requires studying translated curriculum frameworks and exams and student work from a variety of countries to see what students are expected to learn, how well they are expected to learn it, how they are expected to demonstrate that knowledge, and at what age or grade level these expectations are set. As we have done in previous years, we asked states whether they had taken the steps above while developing their standards or assessments.

There is a new resource that may soon be available to help states benchmark and improve their standards and assessments. President Clinton has urged the development of voluntary national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math that states can give to their students to see how they measure up to what we hope will be a rigorous national standard. These tests will provide an opportunity for states to monitor the quality of their standards and assessments. In our report, we asked states whether they plan to give these national tests to their students.

Making Standards Count

Extra Help and Incentives for Students

Although they are very important and worth spending time and energy to get right, developing challenging standards and assessments is only the first in a series of steps we need to take to improve the education our children receive. The more important question, and it is one that teachers and other school staff ask repeatedly, is what will happen to students who are not meeting the standards?

We believe this question has two essential parts. First, will there be a system for identifying students who aren't meeting the standards and providing them with the supports and help they need to achieve? And second, will there be incentives for students to work hard and meet the standards? In other words, will promotion from grade to grade or earning a high school diploma be dependent on meeting the state standards? Following are the specific questions we asked of each state:

Issue 1: Does or will the state require and fund extra help for students not meeting the standards?

For high expectations to truly have an impact on achievement, there must be a system in place for detecting which students are struggling to meet the standards and providing them with extra help before they fall too far behind. Extra help or "academic intervention" could come in a variety of forms, including one-on-one instruction during school hours, after-school tutoring, Saturday school, and summer school.

However intervention and remedial programs are structured, a few things are absolutely crucial. **First,** they should be clearly tied to the publicly disseminated standards, so that everyone—including teachers, administrators, students, and parents—understands when extra help is warranted. **Second,** the responsibility for detecting when students are falling behind should be shared by the state, districts, schools, and teachers—it is not manageable for teachers alone. That is one of the purposes of developing state assessments based on the standards. In some cases, local- and school-level assessments can also help fill in the gaps (i.e., grades in which the state assessments are not given). **Third,** the responsibility for providing intervention and remedial services should also be a shared one—it cannot rest solely on the shoulders of individual teachers or other school staff. There must be a state- and/or districtwide system for providing low-achieving students with the extra resources and attention they need. **Fourth,** this system of diagnosis and intervention must begin in the early grades. Research shows that much of a child's cognitive development takes place at a young age, so waiting until middle school or high school to help low achievers may be too late.

How We Made Our Judgment

In our report, we were interested in finding out which states require that students who are not meeting the state standards receive extra academic assistance. We asked this question of state officials, emphasizing that merely "encouraging" schools and districts to do this isn't enough. We have only given credit to states that both require extra help and provide funds/resources for districts and schools to

carry this out. As with the assessment question, we give credit here to states that plan to require intervention in the future, but only if the proper state authority (e.g., legislature, state board, superintendent) has signed off on that idea. We also try to be very clear about which subjects and which grade levels are specified in a state's intervention system. What we haven't done here is analyze the quality of the intervention programs states and districts have in place. That is a more complicated, though no less important, step that we hope to be able to take in the future.

Issue 2: Does or will the state require districts and schools to make student promotion decisions based, in part, on state assessment results?

Many teachers encounter intense pressure from parents and administrators not to fail or "hold back" students, whether they have mastered the material for a particular grade or not. Often teachers themselves believe it is unfair to hold students back when students in other classes or schools who have learned less are passed on to the next grade. But promoting students who haven't earned it sends students a terrible message: They can get by without working hard or learning very much. This doesn't hold true in the real world, and most youngsters find that out the hard way.

In order for students to work hard and put maximum effort into meeting high standards, they have to see that achievement counts. Simply putting high standards in front of students won't motivate them to spend more time on their school work. If students understand that meeting the standards is a requirement for being promoted to certain grades and, ultimately, for getting their high school diploma, they will take the standards and assessments much more seriously. Without these types of stakes, many youngsters probably won't pay much attention to higher standards, and the burden for motivating them will fall completely on teachers and other school employees.

How We Made Our Judgment

We asked officials in each state whether districts and schools are or will be required to base student promotion decisions at various grade levels in part on whether or not the state standards have been met. In other words, is promotion to certain grade levels tied, in part, to state assessment results? As in the previous question, it isn't enough for a state to merely encourage districts and schools to do this. To get credit here, the state must require that meeting the publicly disseminated standards is a prerequisite for student promotion into certain grades. We give credit to states that plan to implement such promotion policies in the future, but only if the proper state authority has signed off on that idea. We also try to provide information as to which subjects and grades the promotion rules apply to.

Issue 3: Does the state have graduation exams or a system of differentiated diplomas linked to the standards?

Another important way to make standards count for students is to tie the high school diploma to achievement of the standards. In our report, we asked which states require or will require students to meet high standards in order to graduate. We do not give credit to states with "minimum competency" exit exams, which we define as tests that are based on standards below a 10th-grade level. We only give credit to states that require (or plan to require) students to pass assessments linked to 10th-grade standards or above. This does not mean that the test is *given* in 10th grade, rather that the *standards* the test is based on must be at a 10th-grade level or higher. We have established a 10th-grade minimum standard not to imply that this is the highest standard we should expect students to meet, rather, it is the lowest acceptable standard that students should be held to.

We have also included additional information on graduation requirements. For those states with graduation exams, we asked which subjects they cover. In our view, states that require students to pass exams in only one or two subjects are not ensuring that their children will receive a well-rounded academic education. We feel it is important for youngsters to be competent in all four core subjects. As with the previous issues, we give credit to states that plan to put in place graduation exams in the future, but only if the proper state authority has signed off on it.

In order to give readers a better idea of how demanding the exit exams are, we have tried to collect data on the percentage of students who pass these exams each year. This information is difficult to obtain from states. When available, we have

included the data in the *State-by-State Analysis* section.

We have also expanded our scope beyond exit exams to discuss another form of diploma-related incentive: differentiated diplomas. We use the term "differentiated diploma" to refer to situations in which meeting the state standards in certain grades and passing certain assessments is not required, but students who do so will receive special recognition on their diplomas. There are two different ways states are approaching this idea. Some states require students to pass graduation exams and offer differentiated diplomas as an additional standard for students to strive for. In other states, no high school exit exam is required but a differentiated diploma is offered as an incentive for students to meet the state standards.

Although we report on states taking either approach, we only give credit in the charts (under the heading "Student Incentives") to states with required graduation exams. Differentiated diplomas are not a substitute for rigorous graduation standards. In our view, the benefit of the differentiated diploma is that it allows states to set higher standards for students to pursue once they meet the exit standards. The advanced diploma, coupled with high exit standards, should help ensure that all students are challenged and motivated in high school.

Why are some states approaching differentiated diplomas as a substitute for graduation requirements? Probably because it is easier to maintain high standards that are optional than it is to set high exit standards and require all students to meet them. Setting high mandatory exit standards could lead to an unacceptable rate of failure and retention, which in turn could lead to lower standards. The fact remains, however, that optional standards won't be enough to motivate all students to work hard and achieve, and we can no longer afford to let some students slip through the cracks.

There are a number of states that offer advanced diplomas based on the types of courses students take in high school rather than performance on common assessments. For example, some states allow students who take a certain number of advanced courses to obtain a special diploma. This is a useful incentive, but if such diplomas are not tied to a consistently measured standard, they won't be as meaningful to parents, employers, colleges, and others. In this report, we only give credit to states whose differentiated diploma system is directly tied to both the state standards and assessments.

II. How the States Measure Up

The following data are based on our state-by-state analysis of the major issues raised in Section I. All of the state-specific data in the tables in this section are further explained in Section IV.

Summary of Major Findings

Standards

1. The commitment to standards-based reform remains very strong in the states and most consider standards a work in progress.

- 49 states are developing common academic standards for their students.
- 39 states have developed new or revised standards since last year's report.

2. Over the course of the year, the quality of state standards has improved.

- 14 states produced new standards that are stronger than the versions we reviewed last year. Only 3 states produced standards that are weaker than their previous versions.
- Most states (29) have standards in at least 3 of the 4 core subjects that are clear, specific, and well grounded in content (up from 21 last year).

3. Most states still need to improve some of their standards in order to provide the basis for a common core of learning.

- Only 17 states have standards in *all four* core subjects that are clear and comprehensive enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state (up from 15 last year).
- The other 32 states have standards that need improvement in one or more subjects.

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4. States continue to have more difficulty setting strong standards in English and social studies than in math and science.

5. Some state standards are "exemplary" and should be considered models for other states to emulate.

Assessments

1. All but a few states will develop assessments to measure whether their students are meeting the state standards, but the standards are not strong enough in most states to provide a solid foundation for the assessments.

- 46 states either have or are in the process of developing assessments aligned with their standards (up from 42 last year).
- Only 34 states will assess student achievement of the standards in all four core subjects.
- Of the 46 states that are developing aligned assessments, only 19 of them will be basing those assessments on strong standards.

Benchmarking to the Best

1. More states recognize the need for internationally competitive standards, but most lack the resources to determine whether their standards are world class.

- States need help benchmarking their standards to the best in the world.

2. Many states are looking at the national tests proposed by the Clinton administration as an opportunity to benchmark their expectations to a national standard.

- 21 states and the District of Columbia say that they will definitely or probably give their students the proposed voluntary national reading and math tests. Only one state, Iowa, says it will definitely not use the national tests. The rest are undecided.

Making Standards Count

1. Only seven states are seeking to end social promotion by requiring students to meet the state standards before being promoted into certain grades (up from four last year).

2. Only 13 states will have high school graduation exams based on 10th-grade standards or higher.

- 20 states have or plan to have high school exit exams aligned with their standards, but only thirteen of these states will require students to pass exams based on 10th-grade standards or higher.

3. Only 13 states require and fund intervention programs to help low-performing students reach the state standards (up from 10 last year).

Major Findings

Standards

1. The commitment to standards-based reform remains very strong in the states and most consider standards a work in progress.

■ **49 states are developing common academic standards for their students.**

The overwhelming commitment to raising the academic standards in our schools continues to be one of the most important findings in this report. Forty-nine states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have or will have common academic standards for their students. Although achieving consensus on what should go into the standards has not been easy in every state, it is clear that most states are deeply committed to the idea that establishing high standards for students is the first step toward improving the schools.

It is also important to note that this commitment to higher standards continues to transcend political boundaries. Raising standards has become one of the chief educational pursuits in states with both Republican and Democratic leadership. The strong focus on academic standards by the nation's governors and CEOs at the National Education Summit last year was evidence of this, and maintaining this support will be very important as states begin to enact higher standards.

■ **39 states have developed new or revised standards since last year's report.**

There was, once again, a tremendous amount of activity in the states over the past year. Most states have developed new or revised standards documents since we issued our report last year. This demonstrates to us that states continue to consider standards a work in progress. They recognize that they may not have gotten things exactly right on the first or even the second try, yet they are committed to continuing their work until their standards are strong enough to support real change in the schools.

2. Over the course of the year, the quality of state standards has improved.

■ **14 states produced new standards that are stronger than the versions we reviewed last year. Only 3 states produced standards that are weaker than their previous versions.**

■ **Most states (29) now have standards in at least 3 of the 4 core subjects that are clear, specific, and well grounded in content (up from 21 last year).**

As states have worked to create new standards (or to revise existing ones) over the course of the year, we have noticed that serious attention is being paid to the issues raised in this report. Many states have recognized the need to improve the quality and readability of their standards. In some states, we have noticed small improvements, such as cleaning up jargon and using concrete examples to clarify vague terms. In other states, we have seen sweeping changes that have resulted in standards that are much clearer, more concrete, and more focused on content. Fourteen states produced improved standards over the course of the year. In some of these states, the improvements were in only one subject, but in others, the standards improved in most or all subjects (see *Most-Improved States* below).

As a result of the improvements over the course of the year, a majority of states now have strong standards in most of the core subjects. Although there are still only a third of states with strong standards in all four core subjects, most states have strong standards in at least three of the four subjects. This was not the case last year, and it means

Most-Improved States

The following states significantly improved their academic standards in two or more subjects over the course of the year:

California
Illinois
Massachusetts
Nevada
Oregon
Pennsylvania
West Virginia
Wisconsin

Progress Toward Strong Academic Standards

Of the standards in the four core subjects, how many are strong enough to lead to a common core of learning and to support real change in the schools?

	1995	1996	1997	OVERALL PROGRESS
Alabama	3	4	4	↑
Arizona	1	4	4	↑
California	3	3	4	↑
Colorado	4	4	4	↔
Delaware	4	4	4	↔
Florida	0	4	4	↑
Georgia	4	4	4	↔
Hawaii	4	4	4	↔
Idaho	0	4	4	↑
Illinois	0	3	4	↑
Massachusetts	1	2	4	↑
Michigan	4	4	4	↔
New Hampshire	4	4	4	↔
North Carolina	1	1	4	↑
Texas	4	4	4	↔
Virginia	3	4	4	↑
West Virginia	3	3	4	↑
Connecticut	2	2	3	↑
DC	0	3	3	↑
Indiana	1	3	3	↑
Kentucky	0	2	3	↑
Mississippi	4	4	3	↓
Missouri	0	3	3	↑
Nevada	0	0	3	↑
New York	0	3	3	↑
Oregon	0	0	3	↑
Pennsylvania	0	0	3	↑
Utah	4	4	3	↓
Washington	0	2	3	↑
Wisconsin	0	0	3	↑
Louisiana	3	2	2	↓
New Mexico	0	2	2	↑
Ohio	2	2	2	↔
Oklahoma	2	2	2	↔
Puerto Rico	N/A	N/A	2	
South Carolina	1	2	2	↑
Alaska	0	0	1	↑
Arkansas	1	1	1	↔
Maine	0	1	1	↑
Maryland	0	1	1	↑
New Jersey	1	1	1	↔
North Dakota	0	0	1	↑
Rhode Island	0	1	1	↑
Tennessee	4	4	1	↓
Kansas	0	0	0	↔
Minnesota	0	0	0	↔
Montana	0	0	0	↔
Nebraska	0	0	0	↔
South Dakota	0	0	0	↔
Vermont	0	0	0	↔
Wyoming	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Iowa	Not Developing Standards			

that many states can now turn their attention to improving the standards in just one or two subjects.

3. Most states still need to improve some of their standards in order to provide the basis for a common core of learning.

- **Only 17 states have standards in all four core subjects that are clear, specific, and well grounded in content (up from 15 last year).**
- **The other 32 states have standards that need improvement in one or more subjects.**

Although some states have made considerable improvements in their standards, most still have work to do before all four core subjects will be strong enough to support the kinds of changes that need to be made in schools. Standards need to be clear, specific, and well grounded in content if they are going to lead to a consistently rigorous curriculum and consistently high expectations across a state. They also need to define what is most important for students to learn—we call it a "common core"—rather than including everything that can possibly fit under a given topic.

States continue to have problems defining a rigorous common core in each subject. In some cases, the standards are too broad or vague to be meaningful. Example: "Students should be able to read for a variety of purposes." In other cases, concrete skills and content are touched upon in some way but not enough is provided for the standards to be useful. Example: "Students should be able to identify and classify various geometric figures." Which figures? Classify them according to what properties?

Another common problem with standards is the disconnect between skills and content. Some of the state standards that do not measure up to our criteria emphasize skills or processes without adequate grounding in content. Example: "Students should be able to analyze and interpret various historical events." Here the emphasis is on analysis and interpretation, which are very important skills for students to develop. But those skills cannot be used in the absence of some historical knowledge. Which events are most important for students to learn about? In many cases, the standards do not say.

Why is a common core so important? Consider these problems that states will have to contend with if their standards are not clear, specific, and well grounded in academic content:

- **Equity**—Vague standards will be interpreted differently across the state, reducing the chance that all students will receive an equally challenging curriculum. Typically, it is disadvantaged students in poorer communities who are the victims of watered-down curricula and low expectations—they will be hurt the most by vague standards.
- **Mobility**—Significant numbers of students (20% nationwide, 34% in urban areas) change schools or districts each year. Without common standards in place, mobile students arrive at their new school having studied a different curriculum and having learned different material. This makes it very difficult on both students and teachers. Vague standards will lead to very different curricula across a state, which will do nothing to ease the frustrations associated with student mobility.
- **Guidance & Alignment**—Standards are meant to guide everyone in the system toward common goals. If the language is not explicit or if the content of the subject area is not adequately addressed, the standards won't provide much guidance and they won't be very useful. Vague standards will also reduce the chances that curriculum, assessments, and instructional materials are well aligned.
- **Public Support**—Polls show that the public supports higher academic standards, but some states have run into problems when their standards were not clear enough for parents and the public to understand. Vague standards can lead to confusion, suspicion, and opposition to reforms. The more standards are left open to interpretation, the better the chance they will be misinterpreted.

4. States continue to have more difficulty setting strong standards in English and social studies than in math and science.

Although the standards have improved in many states, our subject-by-subject analysis reveals that math and science standards are clearer and more thoroughly grounded in content than English and social studies standards. Thirty-six states have developed math or science standards that meet our

Examples of standards that meet and do not meet the AFT "common core" criterion...

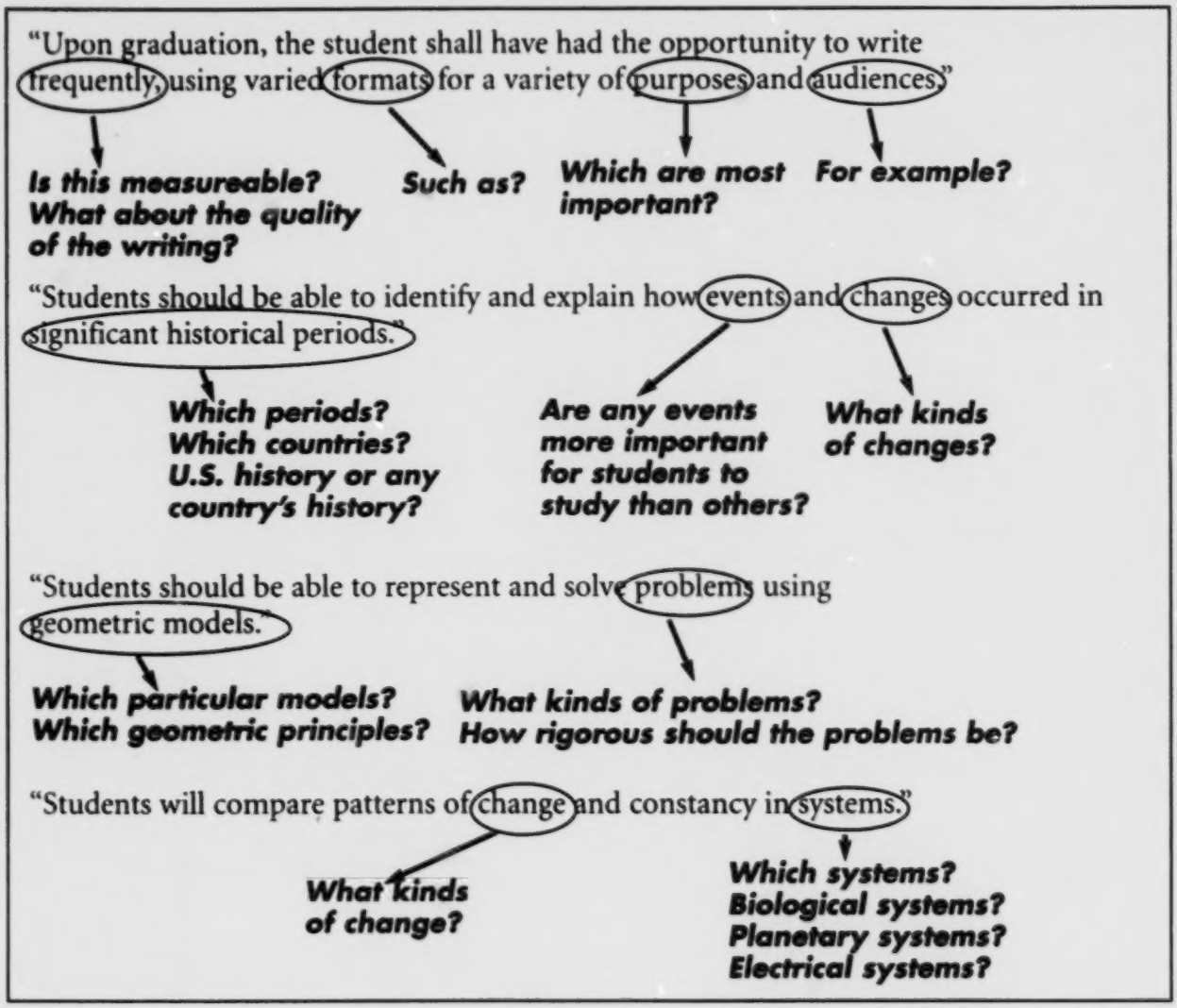
	Strong Standards	Weak Standards
English	Students should be able to develop a descriptive essay that depicts an object or event, maintains a consistent focus, uses a logical sequence, and elaborates each idea with specific details and vivid vocabulary.	Upon graduation, the student shall have had the opportunity to write frequently, using varied formats for a variety of purposes and audiences.
History	Students should be able to describe how United States federalism was transformed during the Great Depression by the policies of the New Deal and how that transformation continues to affect United States society today.	Students should be able to identify and explain how events and changes occurred in significant historical periods.
Math	The student will differentiate between area and perimeter and identify whether the application of the concept of perimeter or area is appropriate for a given situation.	Students should be able to represent and solve problems using geometric models.
Science	Students should be able to describe the basic processes of photosynthesis and respiration and their importance to life.	Students will compare patterns of change and constancy in systems.

"common core" criterion, but only 26 states have developed English standards that we feel are strong enough to lead to a common core of learning, and only 23 have done so in social studies.

The problem with the English and social studies standards in many states is that skills or processes are emphasized over content. This is most noticeable in social studies, where many state standards pay too little attention to historical content. In some cases, periods of history are simply listed, with no elaboration as to which themes, events, or issues are most important for students to study within each period. In other cases, history is treated more as a skill to be developed (e.g., "historical inquiry") than knowledge to be acquired. The result is that students can meet the standards regardless of what they learn about history. This is particularly troubling in light of the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress results in history, which showed that an alarmingly low percentage of students exhibit "competence over challenging subject matter." Only 17 percent of 4th graders, 14 percent of 8th graders, and 11 percent of 12th graders are considered "proficient" in history.

A similar problem exists in state English standards. Some standards pay more attention to the process of writing than to the quality of students' written work. And it is rare to see reading or litera-

...and suggestions for how those standards can be made clearer:


"Upon graduation, the student shall have had the opportunity to write frequently, using varied formats for a variety of purposes and audiences."
Is this measureable? What about the quality of the writing?
Such as?
Which are most important?
For example?
"Students should be able to identify and explain how events and changes occurred in significant historical periods."
Which periods? Which countries? U.S. history or any country's history?
Are any events more important for students to study than others?
What kinds of changes?
"Students should be able to represent and solve problems using geometric models."
Which particular models? Which geometric principles?
What kinds of problems? How rigorous should the problems be?
"Students will compare patterns of change and constancy in systems."
What kinds of change?
Which systems? Biological systems? Planetary systems? Electrical systems?

ture standards that reference particular authors, works of literature, literary traditions, or periods, yet without such references, it is very difficult to convey the quality and complexity of the material students should be exposed to at different grade levels. Saying that students should be able to read or write at "grade level" does not mean much unless states define what grade level reading and writing look like.

The overall weakness of the social studies and English standards may be due to the controversy surrounding both of the efforts to develop standards in these subjects by the national subject area organizations. The national history standards developed by the National Center for History in the Schools and the English standards prepared by the National Council of Teachers of English were both widely criticized when they were first released. The history standards were substantially revised in response to the concerns, but the English standards were not. The math and science standards, developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and National Research Council, respectively, were more widely accepted in the field. Those professional standards are cited much more often in state standards documents, and the consistency among the states is more noticeable in these subjects.

5. Some state standards are "exemplary" and should be considered models for other states to emulate.

As we analyzed the standards documents from all of the states, some clearly stood out above the rest. The standards we have listed as "exemplary" are all written in clear, explicit language, they are firmly rooted in the content of the subject area, and they are detailed enough to provide significant guidance to teachers, curriculum and assessment developers, parents, students, and others who will be using them.

The accompanying chart shows which state standards we consider "exemplary." We have called attention to two different models of standards: those that are defined grade by grade and those that are organized into grade clusters. Although all of the ones we list here are noteworthy, grade-by-grade standards will, by their very nature, provide more guidance to teachers and others. Anyone picking up these documents, whether it be a 2nd-grade teacher, a parent of a 7th grader, or an 11th-grade student, will know what is expected at that particular time in the student's career. That is not the case with standards that are organized in clusters, no matter how strong they are. Grade-by-grade standards will also do a better job of easing the transition from school to school for mobile students.

EXEMPLARY STANDARDS

Subject Area	
English	California* Virginia*
Math	Florida Ohio* Virginia* West Virginia*
Science	Delaware Massachusetts New Hampshire Virginia*
Social Studies	California* District of Columbia Florida Virginia*

*These states have grade-by-grade standards

Assessments

1. All but a few states report that they will have assessments to measure whether their students are meeting the state standards, but the standards are not strong enough in most states to provide a solid foundation for the assessments.

■ **46 states either have or are in the process of developing assessments aligned with their standards (up from 42 last year).**

Educators from other countries are surprised when they learn that the tests most American students take are not well aligned with the curriculum they study. They often wonder how the test results can be understood and used by teachers and parents if there is not a strong connection to the curriculum. They also wonder what message this sends to students about how much the curriculum is valued.

The alignment of standards, curriculum, and assessments is long overdue in this country, and most states are working to forge this connection. In the past, many states have relied on commercially developed standardized tests to measure and report how well their students were doing. As states develop their own standards, most are turning away from the traditional standardized tests and working to create new assessments designed to measure their own standards. However, some states are continuing to use standardized tests, claiming that they are well aligned with their standards. This raises an important question: What does it mean for a test to be "aligned" with a set of standards? If the topic of geometry is covered on a test and mentioned in a state's math standards, is that enough to make those two aligned? Or does alignment require a more in-depth overlap involving specific concepts, skills, understandings, and applications of geometry?

Most states are still early in the assessment development process and there are clearly more questions that need to be answered about what constitutes sound alignment of tests to standards. Our firm judgment on this point awaits further study and inquiry. For the purposes of this report, we give credit to many states that are trying to

make this connection because we believe it is something that deserves recognition.

■ **Only 34 states will assess student achievement of the standards in all four core subjects.**

Although many states will develop assessments linked to their standards in all four subjects, a significant number (12) will only assess students in some of those subjects. Of these 12 states, all but one will link their standards and assessments in math and most will do so in English, but only four will assess students in science, and one will assess students in social studies. This prioritizing may be due to federal requirements in the new Title I law, which most states rely on for some funding. Title I requires states to develop standards in the four core subjects but only requires assessments in English and math. Nevertheless, when certain subjects are assessed and others are not, the clear message sent to students, teachers, and parents is that some subjects are not as important as others. This is the message some states are sending about social studies and, to a lesser extent, science. (We understand the need in some states to start with certain subjects and phase in the others over time—that is why we give credit to states that plan to develop assessments in the future.)

■ **Of the 46 states that are developing aligned assessments, only 19 of them will be basing those assessments on strong standards.**

This is a very important point that sometimes gets lost in the discussion about "alignment." Of the 46 states developing assessments linked to their standards, only 19 will be basing their assessments on standards that we feel are clear and thoroughly grounded in academic content. In 26 states, the standards in one or more subjects are not strong enough to support rigorous, content-based assessments. Without a strong foundation, the assessments, teaching, and learning will suffer.

Why is this the case? States whose standards do not sufficiently address the content of the subject areas may end up with assessments that do not require students to have a firm enough grasp of those subjects. In other words, the assessments may not test what students know about biology or history or literature. Instead, they may focus on whether students can apply scientific reasoning skills or understand the concept of change in history, without requiring any particular knowledge of historical events or scientific concepts. Or, alternatively, if states with vague standards develop assessments that do get more specific about the content students should learn in each subject area, then teachers, students, and others who look to the standards for guidance will be left to guess what will be covered on the assessments. It is unfair and completely unproductive to be obscure in the standards and then hone in on specific content in the assessments.

Benchmarking to the Best

1. More states recognize the need for internationally competitive standards, but most lack the resources to determine whether their standards are world class.

For several years, we have asked state officials what steps they have taken to benchmark their standards and assessments to the academic expectations in other high-achieving countries. Whereas only a handful of states had done so a few years ago, this year, over half of the states reported that they have tried to look at materials from other countries while developing their standards. This heightened interest and awareness is reassuring. However, states still do not have access to the information and expertise they need to do a thorough job of benchmarking.

Comparing state standards to the best in the world is hard work. It requires having access to translated materials from foreign countries, and it requires a certain level of knowledge and expertise about those foreign education systems in order to understand the functions the standards serve. This is clearly an area where every state shouldn't be expected to re-create the wheel. It is simply unreasonable to assume that every state will translate its own materials and hire its own experts. Yet that is the position states currently find themselves in. Without a sustainable national effort to provide states with access to translated materials and benchmarking information from other countries, we cannot expect states to develop world-class standards.

The information that has recently become available around the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) should help to fill this void in the subjects of math and science. TIMSS has

uncovered data and information about the curriculum, expectations, and student achievement in other industrialized countries that until now has not been available. More work will need to be done to get this information to the states and to help them determine how to use it.

2. Many states are looking at the national tests proposed by the Clinton administration as an opportunity to benchmark their expectations to a national standard.

■ **21 states and the District of Columbia say that they will definitely or probably give their students the voluntary national reading and math tests; only one state, Iowa, says it will definitely not use those tests.**

The voluntary national tests proposed by the Clinton administration in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math could become a powerful mechanism for benchmarking state standards and assessments to a national standard and possibly an international standard. States that choose to give these tests to their students will be able to compare how well students do on the national tests with the data provided by the state tests. The hope is that this will allow states to determine whether their expectations are high enough.

While all the details of the national tests have not yet been worked out, states are clearly interested in the possibilities such tests will bring. According to our survey of top state education department officials, 21 states and the District of Columbia report that they will "definitely" or "probably" give the national tests to their students. Only one state, Iowa, said it would definitely not use the national tests. The rest said they were unsure, many saying it depended on what those tests looked like.

Making Standards Count

Extra Help and Incentives for Students

Motivating students to work hard in school is a major challenge that teachers and other school staff (not to mention parents) face day after day. Students are constantly asking questions like, "Why do we have to learn this?" and "Does this test count?"If higher standards and new assessments are going to make a difference in our schools, the results have to "count." Simply putting a higher standard in front of students without giving them tangible reasons to strive for it is an exercise in futility. And it will have a crushing effect on teachers and schools if they are held accountable for students' failure but are given no support or leverage in motivating them to achieve.

Students who are not meeting state standards should not be passed from grade to grade, and they shouldn't be handed a high school diploma. Instead, schools should provide struggling students with extra academic help and they should only be promoted and given a diploma when they have met the standards. This is not about punishing students. On the contrary, it is arguably more of a punishment to let students slide by in school and to let them graduate without the knowledge and skills they need to get good jobs and to succeed in college.

1. Only seven states are seeking to end social promotion by requiring students to meet the state standards before being promoted into certain grades (up from four last year).

Polls clearly show that parents and the public want to see an end to social promotion, the practice of passing students from grade to grade regardless of what they have learned. Social promotion sends the wrong message about hard work, and it is one of the more deceptive and damaging things we can do to children. Sooner or later, youngsters who do not work hard and achieve will find out that failing to learn has consequences. It may not happen until late in high school, when they will struggle to meet the graduation requirements or pass the exit exams. It may not happen until they are looking for a job after high school and have difficulty finding one they are well prepared for. It may not happen until they enter college and find themselves spending money on remedial courses. But it will happen.

Social promotion is being discussed and addressed in some of the largest school districts in the country, but very few states are taking steps to address the problem. Only seven states require districts and schools to use the state standards and assessments as a factor in determining whether students should be promoted into certain grades. Those states are: Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, New

Will States Use the National Tests?

We asked top state education department officials whether they plan on giving students the voluntary national reading and math tests proposed by President Clinton.

	YES	PROBABLY	NO	UNSURE
Alabama				✓
Alaska	✓			
Arizona		✓		
Arkansas				✓
California		✓		
Colorado				✓
Connecticut		✓		
Delaware		✓		
DC		✓		
Florida				✓
Georgia				✓
Hawaii				✓
Idaho				✓
Illinois				✓
Indiana		✓		
Iowa			✓	
Kansas				✓
Kentucky	✓			
Louisiana				✓
Maine		✓		
Maryland	✓			
Massachusetts	✓			
Michigan	✓			
Minnesota				✓
Mississippi				✓
Missouri				✓

	YES	PROBABLY	NO	UNSURE
Montana		✓		
Nebraska				✓
Nevada				✓
New Hampshire				✓
New Jersey				✓
New Mexico	✓			
New York		✓		
North Carolina	✓			
North Dakota		✓		
Ohio		✓		
Oklahoma				✓
Oregon		✓		
Pennsylvania				✓
Puerto Rico				✓
Rhode Island				✓
South Carolina				✓
South Dakota				✓
Tennessee	✓			
Texas				✓
Utah				✓
Vermont				✓
Virginia				✓
Washington				✓
West Virginia	✓			
Wisconsin		✓		
Wyoming				✓

TOTALS	
YES:	9
PROBABLY:	13
NO:	1
UNSURE:	29

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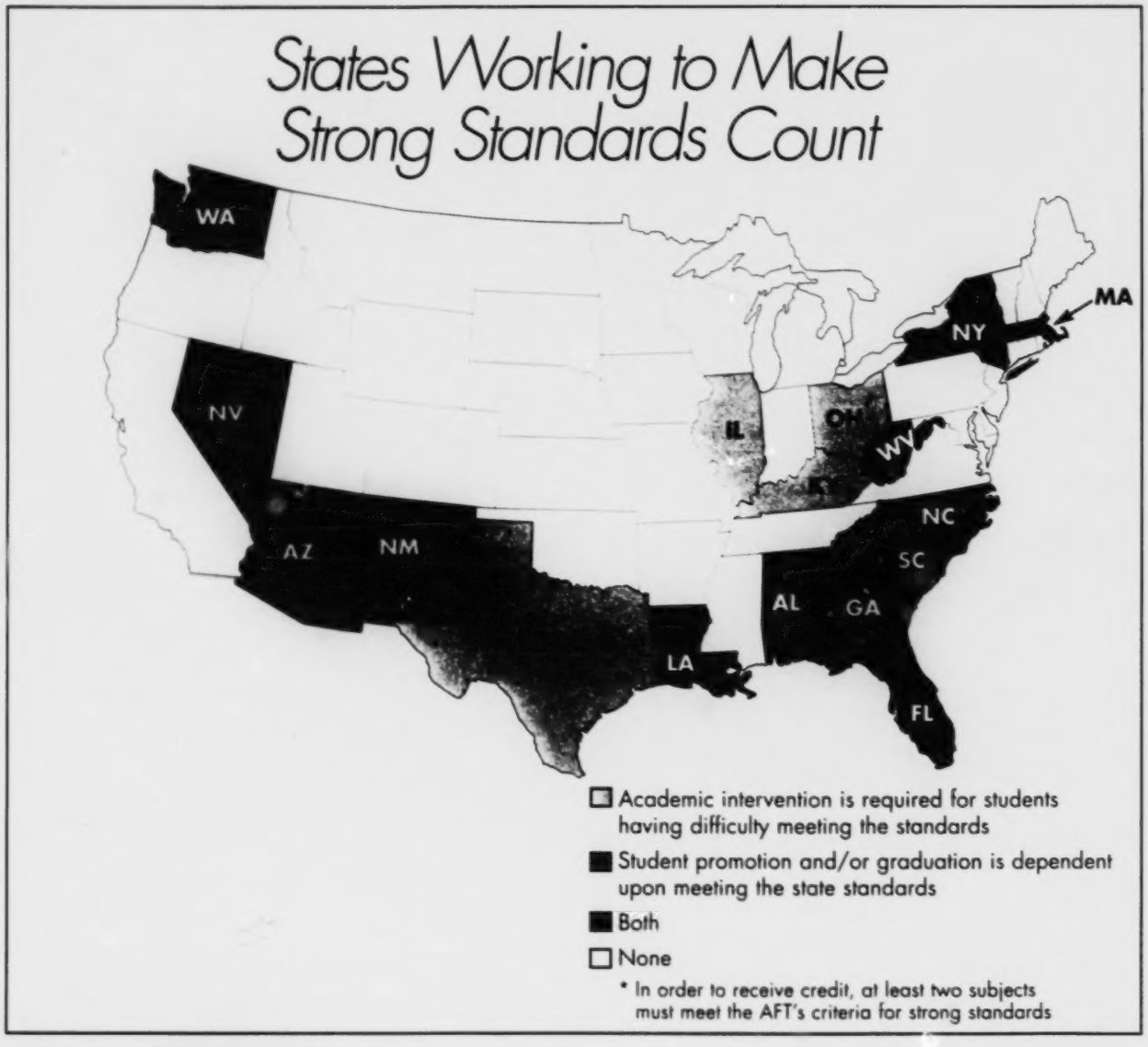
Mexico, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia. Four of these states had these rules in place last year, and three passed laws or enacted policies over the course of the year.

2. Only 13 states will have high school graduation exams based on 10th-grade standards or higher.

■ **20 states have or plan to have high school graduation exams aligned with their standards, but only thirteen of these states will require students to pass exams based on 10th-grade standards or higher.**

Although graduation exams are the most common way for states to hold students accountable for learning, the majority of states do not plan to tie the high school diploma to achievement of their standards. Eight states currently require their students to pass high school exit exams linked to the standards, and 12 more plan to do so in the future. The other 30 states have no plans to link their standards to graduation. In fact, most of those states have no plans for tying any student incentives to their standards.

Of the 20 states that will have graduation exams linked to their standards, less than half will require students to meet the standards in all four core subjects. All 20 states will require students to pass math and English exams, but science and social studies are not as much of a priority. We raised this same



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problem earlier in the assessment section, where a number of states seem to be relegating social studies and science to a lower priority, and we are concerned that these states may be sending the message that these subjects are not important.

How rigorous are states' high school exit exams? Although we did not analyze the tests, we did ask state officials which grade-level standards their exams are based on. Most of the current exit exams that exist in states are "minimum competency" tests that measure 9th-grade standards or lower, but a majority of states with such tests are planning to upgrade them. As the accompanying table shows, 13 states have or plan to have high school exit exams based on 10th-, 11th-, or 12th-grade standards. Seven states will continue to require students to meet only 7th-, 8th-, or 9th-grade standards to graduate.

3. Only 13 states require and fund intervention programs to help low-performing students reach the state standards (up from 10 last year).

In order to help all students reach high standards, schools need to determine which students are having trouble with the standards, and they need to be given extra attention and help. Whether it is one-on-one instruction, after school tutoring, Saturday school or some other type of program, the school system must provide targeted services to low-achieving students, and this must begin early in their educational careers. Only 13 states require and fund such services. Six additional states require intervention but provide no resources for districts and schools to carry it out. There is no reason why every state shouldn't require that low-achieving students are given extra academic help.

High School Exit Exams

Who has them? How challenging are they?

States that have or plan to have exit exams based on 10th-grade standards or higher:

Alabama
Alaska
Arizona
Florida
Georgia
Louisiana
Massachusetts
Nevada
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
South Carolina
Washington

States that have or plan to have exit exams based only on 7th-, 8th-, or 9th-grade standards:

Indiana
Minnesota
Mississippi
North Carolina
Ohio
Tennessee
Texas

States with exit exams not based on the standards:

Hawaii
Maryland*
Virginia*

**Proposals are pending in these states to create exit exams based on the state standards.*

Making Standards Matter

	ACADEMIC STANDARDS Is the state defining what students should know and be able to do in the core subjects?				ASSESSMENTS Will the state measure student achievement of the standards in the core subjects?				STUDENT INCENTIVES Will the state motivate students by requiring them to meet the standards in the core subjects?				ACADEMIC INTERVENTION Will the state provide extra help to students having difficulty meeting the standards in the core subjects?			
	ENG	MATH	SCI	S.S.	ENG	MATH	SCI	S.S.	ENG	MATH	SCI	S.S.	ENG	MATH	SCI	S.S.
Alabama	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Alaska	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	■						
Arizona	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	■						
Arkansas	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
California	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
Colorado	■	■	■	■	■	■	■									
Connecticut	■	■	■	■	■	■	■									
Delaware	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
DC	■	■	■	■												
Florida	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	■			■	■		
Georgia	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Hawaii	■	■	■	■	■		■	■								
Idaho	■	■	■	■		■										
Illinois	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					■	■	■	■
Indiana	■	■	■	■	■	■							■	■		
Iowa																
Kansas	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
Kentucky	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					■	■	■	■
Louisiana	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Maine	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
Maryland	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
Massachusetts	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Michigan	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
Minnesota	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					■	■		
Mississippi	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
Missouri	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								

■ Yes, and the standards are clear, specific, and grounded in content

■ Yes, but the standards are not strong enough

□ No

* State is developing standards, but no documents were available for review

In order to receive credit in columns 2, 3 and 4 above: English assessments must include both reading and writing (col. 2), high school exit exams must be based on 10th-grade standards or higher (col. 3), and academic intervention must be both required and funded by the state (col. 4). Please refer to Section I to further understand how we made our judgments.

	ACADEMIC STANDARDS Is the state defining what students should know and be able to do in the core subjects?				ASSESSMENTS Will the state measure student achievement of the standards in the core subjects?				STUDENT INCENTIVES Will the state motivate students by requiring them to meet the standards in the core subjects?				ACADEMIC INTERVENTION Will the state provide extra help to students having difficulty meeting the standards in the core subjects?			
	ENG	MATH	SCI	S.S.	ENG	MATH	SCI	S.S.	ENG	MATH	SCI	S.S.	ENG	MATH	SCI	S.S.
Montana	■	■	■	■												
Nebraska	*	■	■	■												
Nevada	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▪	■	■	■	▪	■	■	■	▪
New Hampshire	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
New Jersey	■	■	■	■	▪	▪	■	▪	▪	▪	■	▪				
New Mexico	■	■	■	■	▪	■	■	▪	▪	■	■	▪				
New York	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▪	■	■	■	▪	■	■	■	▪
North Carolina	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
North Dakota	■	■	■	■	▪	■	■	▪								
Ohio	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▪					■	■	▪	▪
Oklahoma	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▪								
Oregon	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▪								
Pennsylvania	■	■	■	■	■	■										
Puerto Rico	■	■	■	■	▪	■	■	▪								
Rhode Island	■	■	■		▪	▪										
South Carolina	■	■	■	*	▪	■	■	*	▪	■			▪	■	■	*
South Dakota	■	■	■	■	▪	■	■	▪								
Tennessee	■	■	■	■	▪	■	■	■								
Texas	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					■	■	■	■
Utah	■	■	■	■	■	■	■									
Vermont	■	■	■	■	▪	■	■	▪								
Virginia	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
Washington	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	▪	■	■						
West Virginia	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Wisconsin	■	■	■	■												
Wyoming	*	*	*	*	*	*										

■ Yes, and the standards are clear, specific, and grounded in content

▪ Yes, but the standards are not strong enough

□ No

* State is developing standards, but no documents were available for review

In order to receive credit in columns 2, 3 and 4 above: English assessments must include both reading and writing (col. 2), high school exit exams must be based on 10th-grade standards or higher (col. 3), and academic intervention must be both required and funded by the state (col. 4). Please refer to Section I to further understand how we made our judgments.

III. Recommendations for Moving Forward

A decade ago, the education community debated whether or not the schools needed higher academic standards. Today there is widespread agreement among teachers, students, and the American public that higher standards are needed, and most states are working hard to set standards, develop assessments, and raise student achievement.

We are convinced that educators and the public will continue to support standards-based reform if the standards are strong and the case for those standards is made intelligently. We are just as certain that support will diminish if the standards are vague, non-academic, or otherwise unclear, or if there are no incentives or supports for students as they strive for the standards. What follows are some recommendations to help ensure that standards-based reform succeeds.

1. States need to be encouraged to revise and improve their academic standards.

Building an education system based on standards is analogous to building a house. The standards serve as the foundation, and everything else gets built upon them. The curriculum is based on the standards, assessments are based on the standards, textbooks are based on the standards, teacher training is based on the standards, and all accountability measures are based on the standards as well. With so much resting on the standards, states need standards that are very clear and very strong.

States need constructive criticism in order to improve their standards. They need to be urged to revise something for the second, third, or fourth time until it is right. They need to be encouraged to develop supporting materials that better explain and expand on the standards. They need to be encouraged to go back and make improvements to the standards even after the assessments have been developed. They also need to be given the opportunity to learn from the work of other states and other countries. It is often not clear to states how their standards can be improved until they look at stronger standards from other places.

Kentucky, Massachusetts, Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin are just a few states that have made

significant improvements to their standards as a result of the constructive criticism of the education community and the broader public. The process was smoother in some states than others, but in each case the current version is considerably stronger than the first draft. If nobody had spoken up in these states, the standards may never have been improved.

This is not to say that setting strong standards is easy. It is not. It took other countries with successful education systems years, and even decades, to put high expectations in place and then to build a coherent system based on those expectations. It is not reasonable to expect states to come up with perfect standards and assessments on their first try. But it is irresponsible for states to move forward without making the necessary improvements.

2. States need help to make sure their standards are rigorous and internationally competitive.

When the nation's governors and business leaders made their pitch for standards at the National Education Summit last year, they did not simply call for "high" expectations: Rather, they stressed the importance of "internationally competitive" standards that would drive the performance of American students up to world-class levels. The business leaders at the summit were used to working in a culture that values learning from the competition. If another company is doing something more efficiently or turning out a higher quality product, smart businesses try to understand why and they try to change their policies and practices to increase efficiency and quality.

Although some states have taken steps to determine how their academic standards compare to other countries, most have not. And of the states that have tried to do so, most have relied on their own resources and expertise. They have not had the benefit of a reliable set of resources and a tried-and-true technology for benchmarking academic standards.

What is needed right now is a place for states to turn for help, a place with access to standards, curriculum materials, exams, and student work from other states and other countries. If states and others developing standards and assessments had access to these materials, it would help quite a bit. But states will also need help analyzing the quality and rigor of their work and comparing it to that of other states and countries. This is not something they can do on their own, and it is risky for them to move too far ahead on their reforms without knowing how their standards compare.

One concrete result of last year's Summit was the creation of a national resource center designed to help states benchmark their standards and assessments. The center, called "Achieve," has only recently begun its work and it is unclear how big an impact it will have. If Achieve can assemble the appropriate resources and develop a thorough and reliable process for analyzing the quality of states' work, it may help fill the void that presently exists.

The national tests being developed by the Clinton administration present another opportunity for states to monitor the quality and rigor of their standards and assessments. The tests will be available in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade mathematics, and they will be based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) content frameworks. States can compare what their standards and assessments require to the expectations spelled out in those NAEP frameworks, and by giving students the national tests, they will be able to compare the results of those tests with the results of their own state tests.

3. States should draw on the best work of other states.

When it comes to developing quality academic standards, it is our opinion that states need to spend more time looking not only at what other countries do but also at each other's work. Most states reference one or more of the national standards projects in their standards, but very few show evidence of having looked at the best that their colleagues in other states have to offer.

Why is this important? The most obvious reason is that every state shouldn't be expected to re-invent the wheel. If Massachusetts has spent time and resources putting together an excellent set of science standards, why shouldn't other states look to those standards for guidance? In fact, why shouldn't they borrow from them liberally?

The other reason state standards are a useful resource has to do with their practicality and feasibility. Although some of the national standards documents developed by the major subject area organizations provide very clear and thorough

descriptions of the content and skills students should learn, they were not designed for states to adopt in their entirety. Each of the groups that put these standards together was primarily concerned with its own subject area, and little thought was given to how all of the standards in all of the subjects would fit together. Most agree that taken together there is too much in the national standards documents to be reasonably covered by teachers and students. (The exception here is the English standards produced by the National Council of Teachers of English, where the dearth of content and other information makes them virtually unusable.) Therefore, states have been forced to pick and choose how much of what's in the national standards to include in their own. It follows, then, that states would find more reasonable and manageable models of standards in other states that have already done the hard work of honing the national standards.

4. States should supplement their standards with curriculum guides or frameworks that provide clearer guidance to districts and schools without sacrificing local control.

When we encourage states to make their standards more specific, some respond that they do not want to interfere with local control of the curriculum. In our opinion, the standards that do not meet our criteria spelled out in this report could be made clearer and more specific and still leave plenty of room for local flexibility. There are plenty of states that have come up with standards that provide an appropriate balance between state guidance and local control.

In any event, we recognize the tension that states face, and we want to advance one way to deal with it. States that want to keep their standards focused on certain grade levels rather than making them grade by grade should create curriculum guides or frameworks that illustrate how a grade-by-grade curriculum could be organized around the standards. These frameworks need not be state mandated, but they must be tied to the standards and assessments. Districts that do not want to use the frameworks should not have to, but it should be clear to everyone, including teachers and parents, that the frameworks represent the state's best ideas for how local curricula could be designed to help students meet the standards.

Delaware, New Hampshire, and South Carolina are three states that have tried this approach. They began with standards at certain grade levels that serve as the basis for the state assessments. Now they are developing supplementary guides that provide information on what students should learn in the interim grades. These are not mandated in any way, but teachers and schools will find them very useful as they develop curricula and instructional materials designed to help students reach the standards.

5. States need to make sure their assessments are based on strong standards.

As we have pointed out in this report for three straight years, most states need to make their standards clearer and more specific in one or more subjects. As time passes and states move forward with the development of their assessments, the clarity of the standards becomes even more crucial.

Why is this the case? Assessments are meant to provide valuable information about what students know and what they can do with that knowledge. Standards are meant to define the core knowledge and skills that students should learn thereby serving as the roadmap for the assessments. Standards should guide test developers so they know what to focus the test questions on *and* standards should guide teachers, students, and parents so they know what should be learned. Gone should be the days when test scores dominated the headlines but nobody except for a few testing experts knew what the tests covered.

In order to guide test development and to provide meaningful information to teachers and parents, the standards must be clear and well grounded in the content of the subject area. If a state's standards are too vague or too broad, one of two things will happen with the assessments. Either the test developers will follow the lead of the standards and they will create tests that do not measure content knowledge. In other words, the assessments will not test what students know about biology or history or literature but will focus instead on whether students can apply scientific reasoning skills or understand the concept of change in history. Or, alternatively, if states with vague standards develop assessments that *do* get more specific about the content

students should learn, then the standards will no longer be a true reflection of what the tests measure. It is unfair and completely unproductive to be obscure in the standards and then hone in on specific content in the assessments. Why not be up front with teachers and parents?

Right now, 26 states are developing assessments based on standards that we don't feel are strong enough to guide test development or to provide meaningful information to teachers and parents. While we do not want to imply that states should stop working on their assessments until the standards are exactly right, we do feel strongly that the assessments should require students to demonstrate significant content knowledge in each subject and that the content must be thoroughly reflected in the standards. States will be setting their teachers, schools, and students up for a big fall if this does not happen.

6. States need help determining whether their standards and assessments are aligned.

When we asked states whether they would have assessments to measure student achievement of their standards, most said yes. States agree that it is necessary to have tests that are "aligned" with their standards. That's the good news. The not-so-good news is that there is no shared understanding of what constitutes alignment, and some states are defining it very loosely.

Some states are developing new tests specifically designed to measure the knowledge and skills defined in the standards. Although this does not guarantee a quality test, it is a straightforward approach to aligning tests with standards. Other states are not devoting time and resources to developing their own tests and instead are choosing a pre-existing standardized test from one of several big test publishers. Although some of these states admit the tests are not aligned with their standards, others claim they are. When it comes right down to it, these states are choosing the tests that *come closest* to aligning with their standards. We are not yet convinced that is good enough.

If a state's math standards have a section on geometry, and a standardized test has questions dealing with geometry, is that enough to constitute alignment? Or is there a deeper, more thorough connection that needs to be made in terms of specific geometric concepts and applications? If a standardized test measures many of the reading skills from a state's standards but does not deal with the literature standards in that state, are the standards and the test aligned?

There are many more questions that need to be asked and for which we do not have simple answers, but we think these issues deserve serious thought. States are moving ahead with assessments, and soon people will be using the results of those assessments to make important decisions about students and schools. In the end, the goal is to have tests that are rigorous and standards that clearly reflect and communicate those rigorous expectations. If the tests are not challenging, the fact that they are aligned with the standards is not of much consolation. If the tests *are* challenging but do not legitimately align with the standards, teachers and students will have no way to prepare for the tests—the deck will be stacked against them.

7. States should establish plans for phasing in incentives and consequences, otherwise students will not take the standards seriously.

It is very disturbing to us that most states do not plan on creating incentives for students to work hard and strive for the standards. We know from experience that motivating students in school is a significant challenge. Simply putting higher standards and tougher tests in front of students will not inspire them to work harder and strive for the standards. Students take enough tests as is, and they do not take those tests very seriously when they seem irrelevant to their lives. But things change when students know that the standards and tests count for something. Just look how seriously students take the SAT and ACT tests. When students realize that achievement will pay off in some tangible way, they work harder.

There are many ways for states to make standards "count" for students. State standards can be used to guide promotion decisions throughout a student's school career. The standards can be put in place as graduation requirements, which seems to be the most common course of action for states. Achievement of the standards can be the basis for special recognition or scholarships. Or standards can be used by colleges and employers to help guide their admissions and hiring practices. However this

is done, the AFT firmly believes that without student incentives, higher standards won't be achievable. And polls show that the public agrees.

Some states respond that it is too early in the process for them to put high stakes in place. We understand and appreciate the problems that will arise if consequences are instituted too quickly. It isn't fair to hold students or others accountable for meeting standards until those standards have been introduced into the schools and have had a chance to sink in. That's why we give credit in this report to states that plan to make their standards count in the future. Unfortunately, half of the states don't have any plans at all.

We feel very strongly that every state developing standards should also be phasing in student incentives and consequences in the future. Schools, teachers, parents, and students will be much better off if they can see what is coming years down the road and begin to plan ahead. They are also apt to take the standards and assessments much more seriously if they know these things will count in the future.

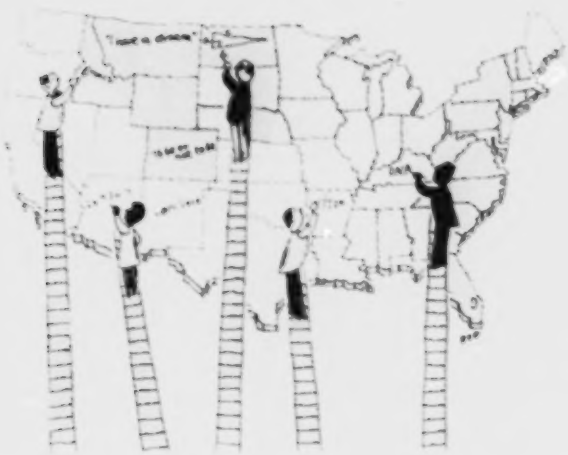
8. States must provide extra help to students who are not meeting the standards.

When we talk about making standards "count" for students, we mean more than the granting or withholding of diplomas or promotions. These things are very important, but they are only part of the picture. Just as important and fundamental to helping raise student achievement is the process of identifying which students are having trouble meeting the standards and providing them with extra help. This should be a shared state and local responsibility.

Unfortunately, very few states seem to be including this in their reform agendas. Only 13 states will require districts to provide academic intervention for students who fail to meet the standards. The rest of the states seem to be assuming the problem will take care of itself.

If state standards are going to drive real changes in the schools, this issue needs to be taken more seriously. Along with state standards should come a requirement that districts provide targeted intervention programs for low-achieving students. And states must share in the costs of providing these services. There are many forms academic intervention can take—afterschool programs, one-on-one tutoring, Saturday school, summer school—and states need not dictate exactly how it is done. But states should make sure that extra help is provided to every student who needs it, and this process should begin in the early grades, before children can fall too far behind. In order to ensure that assistance is provided consistently across the state, states should insist that student performance relative to the state standards and assessments is one criterion used to identify students needing extra help.

IV. State-by-State Analysis



The information in this section is meant to elaborate on the information in Section II. The table on pages 24 and 25 shows how each state fared against the AFT criteria. These state pages discuss why.

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Alabama

Standards: In our 1996 report, we reviewed the Alabama *Course of Study* documents in the core academic subjects. This year, we reviewed the revised math *Course of Study.*

All of Alabama's documents provide grade-by-grade standards from K-8. English and social studies continue grade by grade through high school, while science and math are course by course. Last year, Alabama's standards documents met our common core criterion in all subjects. The new math *Course of Study* is an improvement over last year's version. The standards are more concise, which makes them more feasible given the constraints of time. The addition of sample math problems also helps illustrate the level of performance students need to reach to meet the standards.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: According to state officials, Alabama has state-developed assessments aligned with the *Courses of Study* that are given to all students in writing in grades 5 and 7, and in reading, language arts, and math in grade 11. The state also administers an end-of-course exam in Geometry. There are currently no aligned assessments in science or social studies. The state will be phasing out the 11th-grade assessments and the Geometry end-of-course test and replacing them with new high school level tests in the four core subjects that all students will have to pass to graduate. The state also uses commercially developed assessments in math, reading, and language arts in grades 3 through 11, and in science and social studies in grades 3 through 8. Grades 9, 10, and 11 will be added in the 1997-98 school year. The commercial assessments are not aligned with the *Courses of Study.*

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter

ALIGNED ASSESSMENTS PLANNED

STUDENT INCENTIVES PLANNED

ACADEMIC INTERVENTION PLANNED

CORE SUBJECT BASED ON STRONG STANDARDS

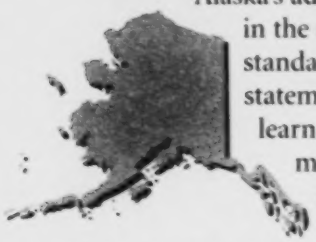
CORE SUBJECT BASED ON WEAK STANDARDS

NO PLANS/APPROVAL

Student Incentives: The 11th-grade assessments serve as exit exams that all students must pass to earn a high school diploma. These exams are based on the 7th- and 8th-grade *Courses of Study* in reading, language arts, and math. As reported above, the state will be phasing out these 11th-grade assessments to develop new tests in the four core subjects that all students will have to pass in order to graduate. The new exams will be based on the 10th- and 11th-grade *Courses of Study.* The state also has an *Advanced Diploma* that students can receive for completing advanced-level courses in the four core subjects that reflect the standards in the *Courses of Study.*

Academic Intervention: The state requires that extra academic help be provided by districts to students who fail to pass one or more of the exit exams. If, by the end of the 12th grade, students still have not passed all the exit exams, districts are still required to provide extra help to students who request it. Students are eligible to receive this extra help until they turn 21, but the state does not provide any funding for this program and, therefore, does not receive credit in our analysis.

Alaska



Standards: In our 1996 report, we reviewed Alaska's adopted *Performance Standards* in the core academic subjects. Those standards provided only broad K-12 statements of what students should learn, with no grade-level benchmarks indicating when students should learn the material. The standards have since been renamed *Content Standards.*

The state is in the process of developing new draft *Performance Standards* in reading, writing, math, and science, which are intended to flesh out the broad content standards and provide benchmarks for particular age clusters. Alaska will not be developing such standards for social studies. We reviewed the reading and math *Performance Standards* for this report. The writing and science standards were not yet available.

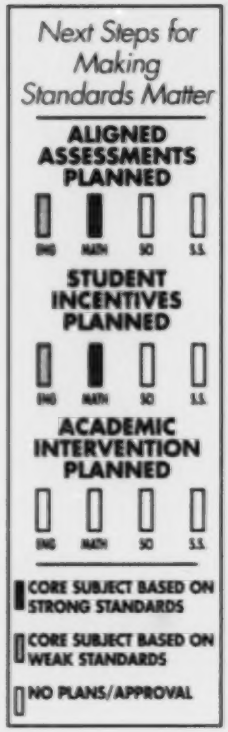
The *Performance Standards* in math and reading are a significant improvement over the *Content Standards* because of the addition of age clusters. These benchmarks will help make the standards more meaningful and useful to teachers and parents, but both subjects could be improved. The reading standards are presented in list form, with very little elaboration as to the meaning of each point. There is also too much repetition from age cluster to age cluster without any indication of how the skills should progress and develop over time. The reading standards are not clear and comprehensive enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state.

The math standards are clearer and more comprehensive than the reading standards, but they, too, could be improved. Although some of the standards are well grounded in content, other standards emphasize cross-cutting mathematical skills and treat those skills as separate from the content. Standards like these are abstract and hard to understand. The math standards will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH	○	◔
MATH	○	◐
SCIENCE	○	○
SOCIAL STUDIES	○	○

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



Assessments: Last year, we reported that Alaska planned to develop new assessments aligned with the standards in the four core subjects. According to state officials, there has been a change in direction and assessments will only be developed in certain subjects. The state currently assesses students in writing in grades 5, 7, and 10. Officials tell us these tests are aligned with the state standards. The state plans to develop new assessments aligned with the standards in reading, writing, and math that will be given in the 10th grade. These tests will eventually serve as high school exit exams. The state also uses commercially developed assessments to test students in reading, language arts, and math in grades 4, 8, and 11. These assessments are not aligned with the state standards.

Alaska is also one of several states that has indicated it will give its students national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math. These tests should provide the state with an opportunity to benchmark student expectations and achievement to a national standard.

Student Incentives: There are currently no incentives for students to meet the state standards. According to legislation passed this year, however, the state will develop high school exit exams aligned with the standards in reading, writing, and math. The exams will first be administered in the

10th grade and, beginning with the class of 2002, students will have to pass the tests to graduate. Alaska is also developing a *State Board Diploma of Excellence*, but it is not clear what students will have to do to earn it.

Academic Intervention: There is currently no intervention required for students not meeting the standards, but the state board is considering a regulation that would require districts to provide extra academic help to students who fail any of the new high school exit exams.

Arizona

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Arizona's draft *Academic Standards* in the four core subjects. This year, we reviewed the final versions of the English and math standards. There are no new versions of the science or social studies standards.

The social studies and science standards met our common core criterion last year, but only by a very narrow margin. We considered them "borderline" documents that needed to be improved. The social studies standards do not provide enough guidance regarding the history students should learn, and the science standards need more elaboration on the content covered by the standards.

The new English standards are slightly stronger than the draft we reviewed last year, particularly in their treatment of reading skills in the early and middle grades. However, there is very little guidance in the standards as to the quality and type of literature students should read at particular grade levels. We still consider these standards a borderline case that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers, parents, and others in the future. The math standards have improved significantly with the addition of "performance objectives" that help to flesh out the content under each standard. These standards are grounded in content and they are clear and specific enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

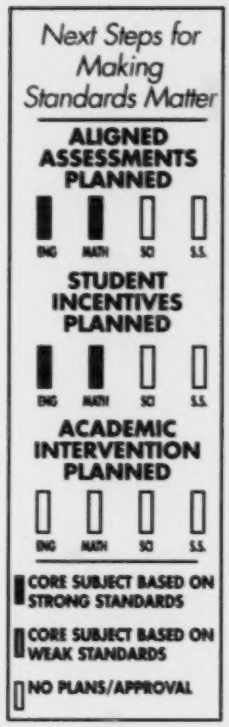
	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH	◐	◐
MATH	◐	◔
SCIENCE	◐	◐
SOCIAL STUDIES	◐	◐

Assessments: Arizona is developing new assessments aligned with the standards in two of the four subjects. Beginning in 2000, all students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 12 will be assessed in reading, writing, and math. The state is not planning to assess students in science or social studies. The state is currently using commercially developed assessments in the four core subjects that are not aligned with the standards.

Student Incentives: Arizona does not currently have exit exams in place, but beginning in 2000, all students will have to pass exams in English and math in order to graduate. According to state officials, the assessments will be based on the 12th-grade standards, but students will begin taking the tests in the 10th grade.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



Arkansas

Standards: In our 1996 report, we reviewed Arkansas' *Curriculum Frameworks* in the core academic subjects. The social studies *framework* was in draft form; the math, science, and language arts *frameworks* were final. For this year's report, we again looked at the *frameworks* including a final version of the social studies document, which did not change markedly from the draft we reviewed last year.

The *frameworks* are organized by grade clusters of K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. As was the case last year, none of the documents except science is detailed and comprehensive enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state. The science standards are better than the rest in this regard, but we consider the *framework* a "borderline" document that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers, parents, and others in the future.

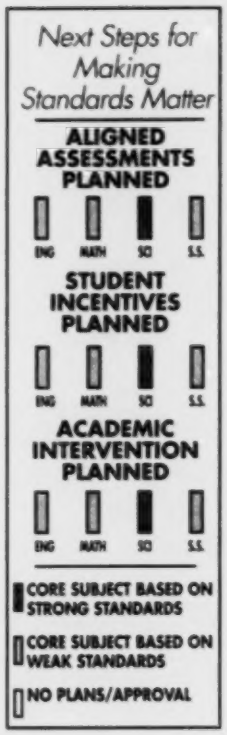
How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: Arkansas is currently pilot testing new state-developed assessments in reading, writing, and math. These assessments will be aligned with the standards and given to all students in grades 4, 8, and 11 beginning in 1999. The state also plans to develop science and social studies assessments that will be linked to the standards and given to students in grades 4, 8, and 11. The state administers commercially developed assessments in the four core subjects in grades 5, 7, and 10, but these tests are not aligned with the *Curriculum Frameworks.*

Student Incentives: According to state law, students assessed below grade level in grades K-4 must attend the state's summer school program or they will not be promoted to the next grade. Since the state will only assess students in the 4th grade, however, most of the responsibility for determining what constitutes "grade-level" performance is and will continue to be left to districts and schools. Arkansas has recently passed legislation that will extend this summer school requirement to 8th and 11th graders who do not pass the state assessments.

Last year, we reported that the state was in the process of developing new high school exit exams in math, reading, and writing that students would have to pass in order to graduate. This year, state officials reported they will not, in fact, have exit exams. The state does have an advanced diploma that students can earn based on receiving certain grades in certain courses, but that diploma is voluntary.



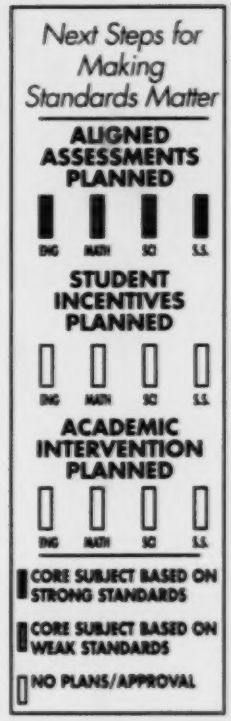
Academic Intervention: Arkansas funds a mandatory summer school program for elementary students who are not meeting the state standards. While the law does not limit the extra academic help to reading and math, that is where the majority of the money is spent. As reported in the student incentives section above, students who are not meeting the standards in grades K-4 must attend this summer school program or be retained, and recent legislation has extended this rule to 8th and 11th graders. The state will also require districts to develop "Education Improvement Plans" for any student not meeting the passing standard on any of the state-developed assessments.

California

Standards: California has had *Curriculum Frameworks* in the core subjects for years. As we have mentioned in the previous edition of this report, those *frameworks* vary in quality. The history/social science *framework* is the strongest of the four core subjects while the English *framework* is the weakest. A legislatively created standards commission is in the process of creating a new set of academic standards that will serve as the basis for a new state assessment system. The *Curriculum Frameworks* will be revised to align with these standards once they are completed.

The standards commission began its work by designing a sensible set of criteria to guide the development of the standards in each subject. Among other things, those criteria called for standards that are clear and explicit about what students should learn and that are benchmarked to the expectations in other leading states and countries. Although the standards commission will develop standards in all four core subjects, only drafts of the English and math standards were available for review at the time of this report.

The new draft standards in both subjects are organized grade by grade. The English standards continue grade by grade through 12th grade, while the math standards provide clusters for grades 9/10 and 11/12. Both sets of standards are written in clear language and are grounded in the content of the subject area. The English standards are extraordinary in this regard. These standards are very clear and very thorough. Attention is paid both to the development of reading skills and to the types of materials—specific genres, literary traditions and periods—that students should read at each level. This is a balance other states have had difficulty achieving in their standards. The same balance is provided in the writing standards. There is attention to both the writing process and the quality of students' writing. It is also worth noting that there is a clear progression of skills and knowledge from grade to grade. The underlying skills and topics are the same for certain grades, but an effort has been made to show how those skills should develop year to year. Some other states have simply repeated the same standard for each grade without showing this progression. For all of these reasons, we consider the California draft English standards "exemplary" and worth a close look by other states.



The math standards are also strong. They are organized around the major domains of mathematics and they are firmly rooted in content. While some states emphasize cross-cutting skills, such as "problem solving," by creating separate standards in these areas, the California standards state that the intention is to embed these skills within the content standards in future drafts. Done well, this will help to show the essential relationship between content knowledge and application skills.

Both the English and math standards are clear and comprehensive enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state. In terms of clarity and attention to content, the new English standards are a significant improvement over the English *Curriculum Framework*. That *framework* will be substantially improved if it is revised to align with the standards. The history/social science *framework* is the strongest of the four subjects. It is presented

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

as a grade-by-grade, course-by-course narrative, and the content is excellent. The science *framework* is also clear and well grounded in content. Both of these *frameworks* should help guide the work of the standards commission in those subjects.

There are two other sets of standards in California worth mentioning, both of which were developed prior to the work of the standards commission. Two years ago, the state superintendent authorized the development of *Challenge Standards* in the core subjects and made them available to districts on a voluntary basis. These standards are quite strong in history/social science and math, and fairly strong in English and science. The math and English standards contain samples of student work that help to illustrate what it means to meet some of the standards. According to officials, the *Challenge Standards* will be revised to align with the commission standards when those are complete.

The California Education Roundtable sponsored a separate effort to recommend high school graduation standards in math and English. Those standards focus on what students will need to know and be able to do to succeed in their work careers or post-secondary education, and they should prove helpful to teachers and others in the state.

Assessments: California currently has no statewide assessment system. The California Learning Assessment System (CLAS) was terminated several years ago because of controversy around its appropriateness and its reliability in terms of measuring the content students should learn. Nothing has yet been developed to replace it, but the legislature has passed a law calling for state assessments based on the standards being developed by the state standards commission. According to the law, new assessments would be given in reading, writing, and math in grade 4, in science and history in grade 5, and in the four core subjects in grades 8 and 10.

It is important to note that individual students will not receive scores on these assessments. This will make it very difficult to create incentives for students to meet the newly created standards.

The state currently encourages but does not require local districts to give their students commercially developed, standardized tests, which are to be chosen from a list of state-approved options. The governor has recently proposed replacing these tests with one set of standardized tests that all districts would be *required* to use in specific subjects and grades. These tests would become the only common assessments yielding individual student scores. According to state officials, these new mandatory tests would be aligned with the state standards once they are complete. If they are not well aligned with the standards, it could lead to confusion and frustration among teachers and parents.

Student Incentives: There are currently no high school graduation exams in California, but there is a form of differentiated diploma that students can earn by passing the *Golden State Exams.* These exams are offered in Algebra I, Geometry, Government/Civics, U.S. History, Economics, English/Language Arts, Written Composition, Biology, Chemistry, and Coordinated Science, and state officials tell us they are linked to the expectations in the *Curriculum Frameworks.* The tests are optional for students, but those who take them in six subjects and achieve high scores receive the *Golden State Merit Diploma.*

While there is discussion of creating further incentives for students to meet the new standards, the current assessment plan will make this very difficult since the state tests based on the standards will not yield individual student scores. Because the only current incentive for students to meet the standards is an *optional* diploma, we do not give California credit for having incentives that motivate all students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Colorado

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Colorado's *Model Content Standards* in the core academic subjects. These standards were adopted by the state in 1995 and are organized into K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters. Every subject met our common core criterion last year and no changes were made in any of the subjects except for English.

This year we reviewed new draft *Literacy Standards,* which were developed to provide more guidance regarding reading skills in the early grades. The new standards are grade by grade from K-3. They are fairly clear and informative but could be improved if steps were taken to show the quality and complexity of reading materials that students should be exposed to in each grade.

By January 1997, each district was required by law to develop standards that meet or exceed the quality of the state's *Model Standards.* According to state officials, Colorado has not yet determined how to monitor district compliance or progress.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

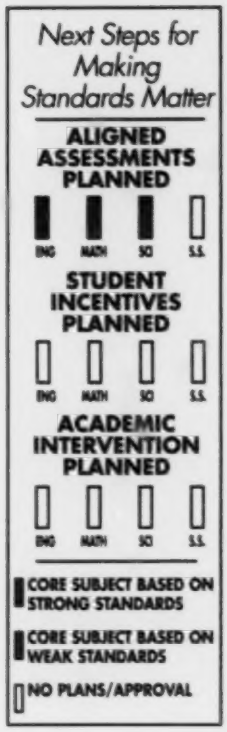
	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: There are currently no state assessments in place in Colorado. We reported last year that the state was planning to develop assessments aligned with the standards in all four core subjects at grades 4, 8, and 11. The state was planning to test a sample of students in each district, rather than all students across the state.

Over the course of the year, plans have changed. The goal now is to give assessments to all students, rather than sampling, but not in the four core subjects. The state will develop assessments based on the standards in 3rd-grade reading, 4th-grade reading and writing, 5th-grade math (which will be based on the 4th-grade standards), and 8th-grade science and math. The tests will be phased in over several years beginning with the 1996/97 school year and will all be in place by 2001.

While much will be gained by testing all students across the state, much has been lost in this new structure as well. Social studies will not be assessed at all, and there will be no state tests in any subject in high school.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



Student Incentives: The state does not currently have student incentives linked to the standards, but beginning in the 1997/98 school year, students' scores on the 3rd-grade reading test will be used, in conjunction with other indicators, to determine whether they are ready for the 4th-grade *reading level.* The state does not yet know how they will place students who are not ready.

Academic Intervention: Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, districts are required to provide extra help to any student in grades K-3 who falls below the state's proficient level in reading. This will be funded by the state, and state assessments will be a factor in determining which students need extra help in the 3rd grade. There are no state assessments in grades K-2, so districts and schools will need to come up with their own methods for assessing reading proficiency. Because Colorado only provides extra help to students in reading, and not in writing, the state does not receive full credit for academic intervention in English.

Connecticut

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Connecticut's *Guide to Curriculum Development* in the core academic subjects. Of the four subject areas, we found the math and science documents to be clear and specific enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state. Neither the English nor the social studies documents contained any references to particular grade levels to indicate *when* students should learn the material and, therefore, they did not meet our criterion.

Over the course of the year, Connecticut has come out with new draft *Curriculum Frameworks* and new draft *Guides to K-12 Program Development.* These documents are designed to be used together. In fact, the *guides* incorporate the new information from the *frameworks.* The state also has *handbooks* in English, math, and science that are designed to indicate what is expected of students on the state assessments. According to state officials, the *handbooks* are aligned with the new *frameworks* and *guides.* We reviewed all available documents in each of the core subjects for our report this year.

The English *framework* suffers from the same problem as the *guide* we reviewed last year. It does not provide any grade benchmarks to indicate when students should learn the material. The assessment *handbooks* in English provide useful samples of student work at various grade levels, but they do not provide a defined set of standards for those grades.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

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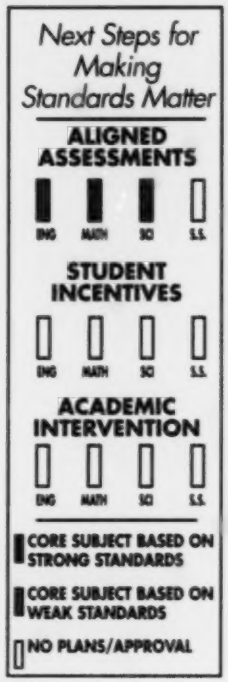
The rest of the subjects do provide grade benchmarks. The math and social studies *frameworks* are organized into K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters; the science *framework* is clustered K-2, 3-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

The science *framework* and *guide* are the strongest of the four content areas. These documents provide a considerable amount of guidance in terms of the content and skills students should learn and, as a result, they provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state. The math *framework* covers the major domains of the subject, but it is not as detailed or as grounded in content as the document we reviewed last year. The assessment *handbooks* in math provide clearer, more concrete expectations, and they are strengthened by the use of sample assessment questions and student work. Taken as a whole, the math documents meet our common core criterion.



The social studies *framework* and *guide* are an improvement over the materials we reviewed last year. The standards are now organized into grade clusters and they are written in clearer language than the earlier version. There has been an effort to improve the history component by laying out the historical periods that should be studied. This is an important step, but these standards could be strengthened by elaborating on what is most important for students to understand about those periods.

Assessments: According to state officials, Connecticut's state assessment system is aligned with all of the materials discussed above and plans are to make them more closely aligned in the future. The assessments are given to all students in language arts and math in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10, and in science in grade 10. The state does not assess social studies.

Student Incentives: Connecticut does not have high school exit exams. Instead, for each subject area in which students meet or exceed the state goal on the 10th-grade assessments, a *Certificate of Mastery* is awarded and attached to the high school transcript. In 1996, 41 percent of students earned the certificate of mastery in math on their first attempt, 36 percent earned it in English, and 34 percent earned it in science. Because all students can graduate high school regardless of the scores on the 10th-grade assessments, we do not give Connecticut credit for having incentives that motivate *all* students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required

Delaware

Standards: For both our 1996 and 1997 reports, we reviewed Delaware's *New Directions Curriculum Frameworks* in the four core subject areas. They have all been finalized and adopted. The standards in each subject are broken into K-3, 4-5, 6-8, and high school clusters. All of the core subjects are clear and detailed enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state, although the social studies standards would be significantly strengthened if they provided more detail in terms of the history content students should learn. We consider the science standards "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states.

In order to provide extra guidance to teachers and local curriculum developers, the state will now develop documents that will flesh out and expand upon the standards for every grade. These grade-by-grade guides will help fill in the gaps between the grades covered by the *frameworks*. No one will be forced to follow these guides, but if they are as strong as the *frameworks*, they will very likely be welcomed and used by teachers.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
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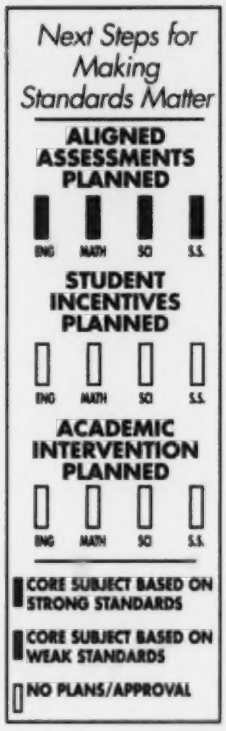
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: Delaware is developing new assessments aligned with the *frameworks* in English and math in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10, and in science and social studies in grades 4, 6, 8, and 11. The new English and math assessments will be in place in the 1997/98 school year; the science and social studies assessments will be in place the following year. Until the new assessments are in place, the state will only test students in writing in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. These writing assessments are not linked to the *frameworks*.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards, but legislation is currently pending that would require student promotion decisions to be based, in part, on state assessment results. The same legislation would also require high school students to pass the 10th-grade assessments in order to graduate, and a distinguished diploma would be awarded to students who score at a higher level on those exit exams.



Academic Intervention: The state currently requires and funds intervention for students, but it is not aligned with the standards. Pending legislation would require districts to provide extra academic help to any student not passing any of the state assessments.

District of Columbia

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed DC's *Curriculum Frameworks* in the four core academic subjects. There were new versions of the *frameworks* in English and history this year, but these were not significantly different from the drafts we reviewed last year.

The *frameworks* are organized according to what students should know at the end of grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. The math *framework* is the weakest of the four subjects. Although it touches on the major domains of mathematics, the *framework* is not concrete and detailed enough about the core content all students should learn. The *framework* could be strengthened by breaking down broad terms into concrete knowledge and skills, and by elaborating on the underlying content within each area of mathematics. Examples of the types of problems students should be able to solve at each grade level would also improve the standards. According to D.C. officials, the math *framework* is currently being revised, but there were no drafts available for our review.

The science *framework* is clearer and more focused on content than the math *framework*, but it, too, could be improved by fleshing out each standard with detail and specifics. This type of elaboration would help make the *framework* more useful and more meaningful to teachers.

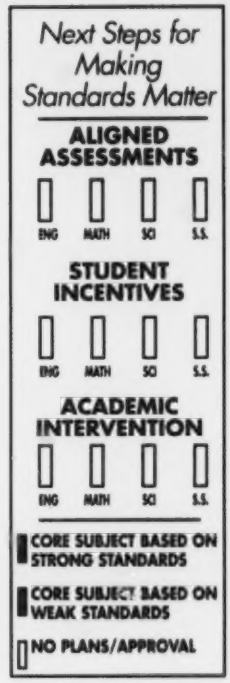
The English *framework* is written clearly, and it provides considerable detail for the four grade clusters it covers. A strength of the *framework* is that proper emphasis is placed on writing and on literature. These sections could be made stronger, however, by defining the quality of writing and of the complexity of literature students should be exposed to at each grade level. Both the science and English *frameworks* meet our common core criterion but both could be improved as well.

The history *framework* is the strongest of the four subjects. It is quite clear and specific in each grade cluster, and the standards are firmly rooted in historical content. In fact, the D.C. standards are among the best we've seen in terms of expecting students to learn a substantial amount of history from the elementary grades onward. We consider these standards "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states.

According to D.C. officials, new documents will soon be released that will break down the standards into grade-by-grade guidance for teachers. These materials were not available in time for review in this report.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



Assessments: We reported last year that D.C. would have new assessments aligned with the standards in place this year. That is no longer the case. New school authorities are currently working out a plan for curriculum, assessment, and accountability, and while they seem to be committed to the idea of developing tests aligned with the *frameworks*, final decisions have not yet been made.

Currently, all students are assessed using commercially developed, standardized tests in reading in grades 1 through 6, 8, 10, and 11, and in math in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10. These tests are not aligned with the *frameworks*.

Student Incentives: The District of Columbia does not currently have an earned promotion policy or exit exams that students must pass in order to graduate from high school, but officials claim there

are plans to put both in place. District officials say they are planning to require that promotion to certain grades be dependent upon whether students have met the academic standards spelled out in the *Curriculum Frameworks.* There are also plans to put high school exit exams in place in reading, writing, and math. Those tests would be based on the 9th-grade standards, and students in the class of 2001 would be the first required to pass the tests in order to graduate. These proposals have not yet been approved.

Academic Intervention: As we reported last year, officials hope to be able to provide extra academic help to students who do not pass the assessments. This proposal has not been approved yet.

Florida

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Florida's draft *Curriculum Frameworks* in the four core subject areas. Since then, the *frameworks* have all been finalized. All four subjects met our common core criterion last year and continue to do so this year.

Included in each of the *frameworks* are the state's standards, called the *Sunshine State Standards*. These standards are arranged in grade clusters of PreK-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12, and they are clear and specific enough to provide the basis for a common core curriculum in each subject. The *frameworks* also include "sample performance descriptions" that help to elaborate on the expectations communicated in the standards. According to state officials, teachers and parents in Florida should pay close attention to these performance descriptions because they form the basis for the new state assessments. The performance descriptions are the clearest and the most effective in math and social studies. We consider those subjects "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

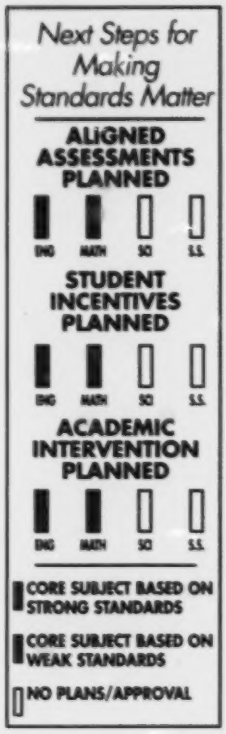
	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: Florida is field testing new assessments that state officials tell us are aligned with the *Curriculum Frameworks*. All students will be tested in reading in grades 4, 8, and 10, and in math in grades 5, 8, and 10. The state does not have assessments in science or social studies, but according to state officials, there is discussion of developing such assessments in the future.

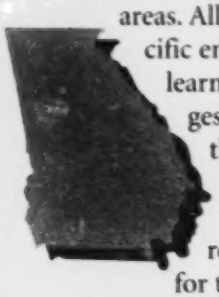
Florida currently assesses writing in grades 4, 8, and 10, and reading and math in grade 11. Only the writing assessments are aligned with the state standards. Officials report that they are planning to phase out the 11th-grade tests in the future.

Student Incentives: Recently passed legislation will require promotion from grade to grade to be based, in part, on the state standards and assessments. Currently, students must also pass the 11th-grade assessments in math and reading to graduate. According to state officials, 98 percent of students in the class of 1996 passed the exit exams. Florida is planning to phase out the 11th-grade assessments and require students to pass the new 10th-grade tests in reading, writing, and math in order to graduate. There is no timeline for implementation. The state will also be developing a "college-ready" diploma that students can earn by reaching a certain score on the exit exams.

Academic Intervention: In spring 1997, legislation was signed by the governor that will require districts and schools to provide extra academic help to students who are not proficient in reading, writing, or math in grades 1 through 5. Florida also requires that "instructional assistance" be provided by districts to students who do not pass any section of the high school exit exams. Recently passed legislation provides funding for these programs.



Georgia



Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed the *Quality Core Curriculum* in the four core subject areas. All four subjects were clear and specific enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state, but we suggested that improvements be made to the English and social studies standards. The state is in the process of revising the *core curriculum* and we reviewed drafts of those revisions for this year's report.

The standards continue to be organized grade by grade in K-8 and course by course in high school, but the revised standards in each subject are clearer and more focused than the previous version. The English standards have been pared down considerably and now define a more reasonable core of knowledge and skills. Reading and writing skills are handled well, but the literature section could be improved by providing more guidance regarding the quality and complexity of the materials students should be reading in various grades. It is also worth pointing out that this version, like the previous one, repeats some of the same reading standards from grade to grade at the elementary level without showing how these skills should build and develop over the years.

The math standards have changed the least from the version we reviewed last year. The standards are clear and grounded in content, but the presence of a separate "skills" section is somewhat confusing and seems unnecessary as most of the information is simply repeated from grade to grade. The new science standards are stronger than the previous version. The standards are more focused and do a good job of combining content and skills. The new social studies standards are also an improvement over the version we reviewed last year. The history section is very strong from the elementary grades onward. However, the document does contain a new section on socialization skills that does not seem appropriate for a standards document.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
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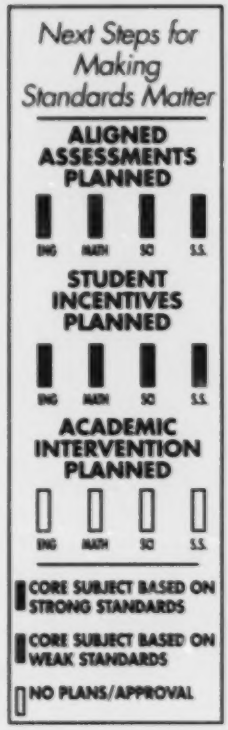
SOCIAL STUDIES		



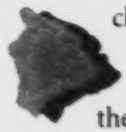
Assessments: According to state officals, Georgia will develop new assessments aligned with the new standards. These tests will be given in the four core subjects in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 beginning in 1999. Until then, the state will administer commercially developed assessments in the core subjects in grades 3, 5, and 8. The state will also assess all students in the four core subjects at grade 11 using the state-developed assessments aligned with the standards we reviewed last year.

Student Incentives: Georgia currently has exit exams in the four core subjects, which cover material from the 9th-, 10th-, and 11th-grade standards in the *Quality Core Curriculum.* New exit exams aligned with the revised *core curriculum* will be developed once the new standards are complete.

Academic Intervention: As we reported last year, Georgia has a voluntary summer school program that the state funds and districts can choose to make use of. This program is available to those students who do not pass the state-developed tests, but districts are not required to offer it and, therefore, Georgia does not receive credit for academic intervention in our analysis.

Hawaii

Standards: In both our 1996 and 1997 reports, we reviewed Hawaii's *Performance Standards* in the four core subjects. The state is currently revising its standards but there were no new drafts available for our review in this report. The standards are arranged in K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12 grade clusters. The science standards are the clearest and most thorough of all of the subjects. The math standards could be strengthened by providing more detail and elaboration. The English standards are fairly strong, but they, too, could be improved. Some of the standards are repeated from grade cluster to grade cluster without enough of an indication of how the knowledge and skills should build and progress over the years. The social studies standards also need to be fleshed out to provide more detail in the civics and history sections. The math and science standards meet our common core criterion, but we consider the social studies and English standards "borderline" cases that will need to be strengthened in order to be of maximum use to teachers, parents, and others in the future.

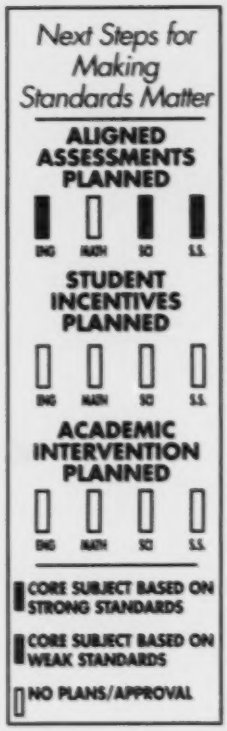


How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: Hawaii is developing a new assessment system that will include both local- and state-developed components. Since this report is focused on state-level activity, we will only report on the state-developed assessments. State officials report that the new state assessments will be aligned with the standards and given in grades 3, 6, and 8 in the 2000/01 school year. The state will develop new literature (reading and writing), science, and social studies tests, but there are no plans to develop new math assessments. Instead, the state will continue to administer commercially developed, norm-referenced math and reading tests in grades 3, 6, and 8. The state also administers state-developed tests in the 10th grade in reading and math. These are not aligned with the standards and officials don't know if they will be in the future.

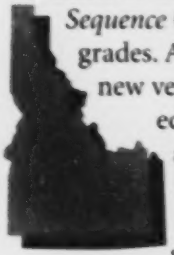
Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



Student Incentives: All students must pass the 10th-grade reading and math assessments in order to graduate high school. The tests are not currently linked to the state standards and it is unclear whether they will be in the future. Hawaii also has an advanced diploma, called the *Board of Education's Recognition Diploma*, that students can earn by completing additional courses beyond the minimum high school requirements and by maintaining a certain grade-point average. This diploma is not linked to the state standards.

Academic Intervention: The state requires that districts provide extra academic help to all students who fail the exit exams but, as mentioned above, these exams aren't aligned with the standards. State funds are provided for this program.

Idaho



Standards: In our 1996 report, we reviewed drafts of the new *Skills Based Scope and Sequence Guides* covering the elementary grades. Although state officials tell us that new versions of the *guides* have been adopted by the State Board, they were not able to share these with us in time for review in this report. The state plans to begin developing high school exit standards this summer and *Scope and Sequence Guides* for grades 7-12 later this year.

The draft K-6 *guides* that we reviewed for last year's report provide grade-by-grade standards that are well grounded in content and quite detailed. The English *guides* are especially detailed, with separate documents for reading, writing, language, and spelling. All four subjects are clear and specific enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state, but the English *guides* could be improved if some of the material were condensed.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
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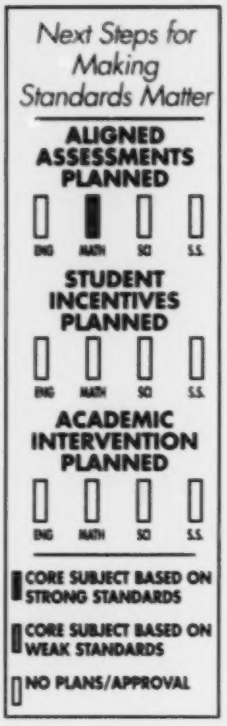
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: The state assesses all students in writing in grades 4, 8, and 11, and in math in grades 4 and 8. Idaho is planning to align these state assessments with the *guides* once they have all been adopted. The state board has recommended that science and social studies assessments be developed, but there has been no official decision yet. Idaho also uses commercially developed tests in the four core subjects in grades 3 through 11. These commercial tests are not aligned with the state standards.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



Illinois

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed the Illinois draft *Academic Standards* in the four core subjects. Over the past year, the state has worked to revise these standards. For this report, we reviewed new drafts, which have been renamed *Learning Standards.*

The standards in each subject are organized into early elementary, late elementary, middle/junior high, early high school, and late high school clusters. The math and science standards have both improved over the course of the year. Some of the more abstract terms and phrases in both subjects have been replaced by concrete, content-oriented standards. By making the standards more firmly rooted in content, the state has made them clearer and easier to understand. Both subjects provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state.

The social studies standards have also improved this year. Whereas last year's version contained broad statements without a defined core of history, the new draft pays considerably more attention to the core knowledge all students should acquire. This is accomplished by weaving historical content into standards covering areas such as economics and political systems. While this draft is much stronger than the previous version, there are still areas that could be strengthened with the addition of more content-specific references.

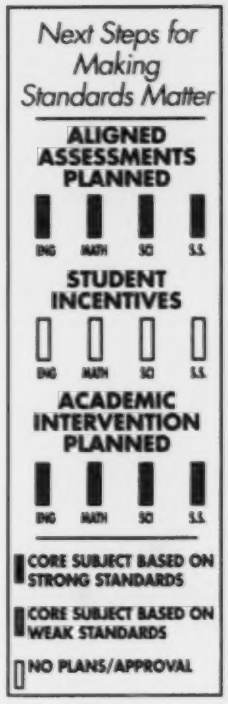
The English standards have changed the least since last year's report. Although some of the standards have been reorganized and reworded, there are still some areas that need to be fleshed out and made more concrete. For example, the standards for each cluster say that students should "read age-appropriate material with fluency and accuracy," but there is no further guidance as to how challenging and complex the literature should be at each grade cluster.

Assessments: Illinois' assessments are not currently aligned with the *Learning Standards,* but state officails say they will be in the future. Currently, reading, writing, and math assessments are given to all students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10, and science and social studies are assessed in grades 4, 7, and 11. A new state law will require assessments to be administered in reading, writing, and math in grades 3 and 5, and in the four core subjects in high school. This will begin in the 1998/99 school year.

Student Incentives: Although there are no high school exit exams in Illinois, there are plans to create a differentiated diploma system. According to state officials, new 12th-grade exams will be developed in the four core subjects and given to students beginning in 2000. The tests will be voluntary, and students who receive a high enough score will receive the *Prairie State Achievement Award.* The exams will be linked to the state standards. Because the only incentive for students to meet the standards is *optional,* we do not give Illinois credit for having incentives that motivate all students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: Illinois plans to develop a new summer school program for any student who fails to achieve a certain level on the 3rd- and 5th-grade assessments. The state will fund this program.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Indiana

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed the Indiana *Proficiency Guides* in the four core subjects and the high school *Competencies* in science and math, which are meant to complement the *Proficiency Guides*. This year, we reviewed new versions of the math, science, and social studies *Proficiency Guides* and a new draft of the English high school *Competencies*.

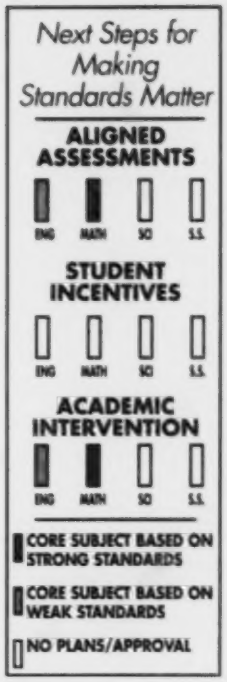
The math standards continue to be the strongest of the four subjects, although a structural change in the *Proficiency Guide* makes it more difficult to navigate. The *guide* provides grade-by-grade standards through 8th grade, and the high school *Competencies* provide course-by-course standards for high school. The standards in the *guide* are very clear and grounded in content, but they are sometimes hard to find amidst the variety of teaching examples that are provided.

The new science *guide* is a considerable improvement over the version we reviewed last year. There is now a much better balance between scientific skills and content. The new social studies *guide* is not significantly different from the version we reviewed last year. Both subjects meet our common core criterion, but the social studies standards could be strengthened with more attention to history in the elementary grades.

The English standards are the weakest of the four subjects. Both the *Proficiency Guide* and the high school *Competencies* suffer from a lack of attention to concrete skills and content. Although there are quite a few standards, most could be interpreted in a variety of different ways, and some are probably not measurable.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

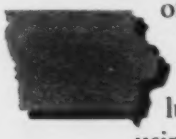


Assessments: Indiana's state assessments are aligned with the standards. All students are tested in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 in math and English only. State statute allows for science and social studies assessments to be added, but there are no plans to do this.

Student Incentives: Although Indiana does not currently have a high school graduation exam, beginning with the 1997/98 school year, students will have to pass exams in English and math in order to graduate. These assessments will be given in the 10th grade and will be based on the 9th-grade standards rather than the 10th-grade standards, as state officials had reported last year. Becuase the exit exams will be "minimum competency" tests based on standards below a 10th-grade level, Indiana does not get credit for student incentives in our analysis. Indiana also has an *Academic Honors Diploma* students can earn by taking certain courses and achieving certain grades in those courses.

Academic Intervention: Indiana has an elaborate intervention program, which is funded by the state and required of all districts and schools. The state has established four achievement levels (or "tiers") on the state English and math assessments that it considers low enough to warrant extra help for students. Students who score in tiers 1 and 2 (both below the passing standard) are *required* to receive extra academic help. Students who score in tiers 3 or 4 (3 = slightly below passing; 4 = slightly above) are eligible for state assistance but it is not required. The state has developed a funding formula that directs more money to those schools with the most tier 1 and 2 students. After that money has been distributed, schools can solicit the state for further funds and services for tier 3 and 4 students.

Iowa



Standards: Iowa is the only state without statewide academic standards. According to state officials, districts are required to develop their own. Officials also tell us that the state is developing a "model curriculum" that districts will have the option of using. This will not be mandated nor will it be measured by state assessments. There were no drafts available for review in this report.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	
MATH	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	
SCIENCE	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	

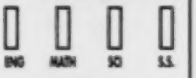
Assessments: There are no state assessments nor are there plans to develop any in the future.

Student Incentives: None.

Academic Intervention: None required.

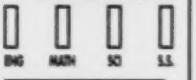
Next Steps for Making Standards Matter

ALIGNED ASSESSMENTS



STUDENT INCENTIVES

ACADEMIC INTERVENTION



- CORE SUBJECT BASED ON STRONG STANDARDS
- CORE SUBJECT BASED ON WEAK STANDARDS
- NO PLANS/APPROVAL

Kansas

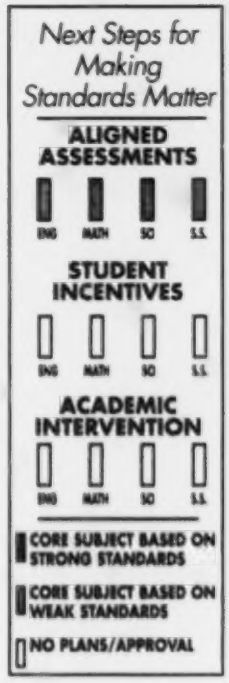
Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed the Kansas *Curriculum Standards* in the core academic subjects. The social studies standards were in draft form; the science, math, and English standards were final. This year, the social studies standards are final and the English standards have been revised. The standards are not significantly different from the versions we reviewed last year. Therefore, our judgments from last year carry over to this year.

The Kansas standards are all organized by grade clusters (the breakdown is different in each subject), but no subject is clear and specific enough about the academic content students should learn to lead to a common core of learning across the state. The English standards are particularly weak in this regard. Many of the standards are simply repeated from elementary through high school with no attempt to show how students should build and improve their skills through the grades. In some subjects, elaboration is provided through instructional "examples," but it is clear in these documents that these are not considered part of the standards. This becomes a real problem in a subject like social studies where the only substantive reference to particular events or periods of history appears in the "examples." It significantly weakens the standards and reduces the chance that students across the state will learn a common core and be held to common expectations.

Assessments: Kansas has state-developed assessments aligned with the curriculum standards, which are given to all students in the core subjects. Reading is assessed in grades 3, 7, and 10, writing and science in grades 5, 8, and 10, math in grades 4, 7, and 10, and social studies in grades 5, 8, and 11. Only the math and reading assessments are administered every year. Writing is assessed every other year and science and social studies are assessed in the years writing is not.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.



How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Kentucky

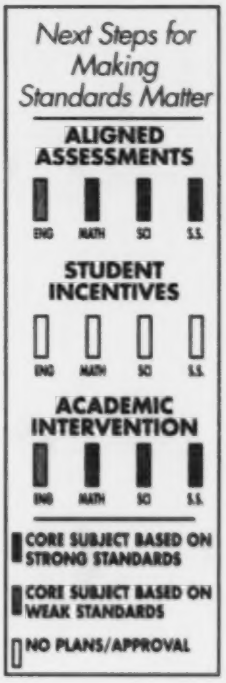
Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed a draft of Kentucky's *Core Content for Assessment* in the core academic subjects. This was a new document designed to flesh out a rather broad set of state standards. Although we thought some of the subjects could be strengthened, we praised the state for trying to clarify to teachers and others what is most important for students to learn. Over the course of the year, the *Core Content* has been finalized and adopted by the state.

Since our last report, we have also learned of two new sets of materials that are designed to complement the *Core Content* in certain subjects: "teacher handbooks" have been developed to help teachers assess their students' writing performance; and *Courses of Study* are being created in the core subjects to guide curriculum development in local districts. We reviewed available drafts of these documents in addition to the new version of the *Core Content* in this year's report. Although the *Courses of Study* will eventually cover all grades, only drafts of the high school documents were available at the time of our report.

The science *Core Content* continues to be more thorough and better grounded in content than the rest of the subjects. It is clear and specific enough to provide the basis for a common core of knowledge and skills across the state. The draft *Courses of Study* for high school science do not add significantly to the *Core Content*. They provide a good outline of the concepts that should be covered, but these need to be fleshed out further to provide solid guidance to teachers and local curriculum developers.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



The math *Core Content* is not as clear and detailed as science. Although the standards cover important concepts and skills, further elaboration would help to strengthen them. The *Courses of Study* for high school math have the potential to go above and beyond what is covered in the *Core Content*, but they, too, need to be strengthened. Some sections provide concrete, detailed standards, but other sections simply provide a list a of concepts. These should be fleshed out so that it is clear what students should know and be able to do with those concepts. In early drafts of the social studies *Core Content*, history was not given adequate attention. It was treated more like a skill to be used than knowledge to be acquired. Last year's draft showed real improvement in this regard with the addition of a history section that began to specify a common core of content. This was a great start, but we thought more elaboration was still needed. The draft high school *Courses of Study* for social studies now begin to provide that elaboration. Some of the course descriptions are quite thorough and detailed, others are not as substantive, but as a whole these new materials take things a step further than the *Core Content*.

The English *Core Content* improved over the past year. The draft we reviewed last year addressed reading fairly thoroughly, but very little attention was paid to writing. The new draft discusses writing at each grade cluster, which is an improvement, and it references the new teacher handbooks in writing where samples of student work are analyzed. This helps to give a vision of what student work should look like at the benchmark grades, but the criteria for quality writing at each grade level are implied rather than defined. These materials could be more

useful if the standards were stated more explicitly. In their current form, the draft *Courses of Study* in high school English do not add significantly to the existing standards.

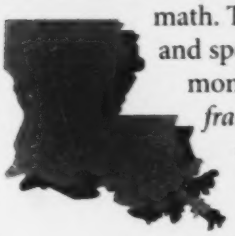
Assessments: Kentucky has assessments in the core subjects that are aligned with the state standards and given to all students across the state. Students are assessed in reading and science in grades 4, 7, and 11, in writing in grades 4, 8, and 12, and in math and social studies in grades 5, 8, and 11. This year the state also began using commercially developed tests in English and math in grades 3, 6, and 9. These commercial tests are not aligned with the state standards.

Kentucky is also one of several states that has committed to giving its students national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math. These tests should provide the state with an opportunity to benchmark student expectations and achievement to a national standard.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: Kentucky law requires districts to provide "extended school services" to students who are not performing well enough to meet the state standards, and special funds are provided by the state for this purpose.

Louisiana



Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Louisiana's new draft *Frameworks* in science and math. The science *framework* was clear and specific enough to meet our common core criterion, but the math *framework* was far less detailed and clear in terms of the content students should learn. The state will continue to refer to the math and science documents as *Frameworks*, but the new standards in the rest of the subjects are being called *Content Standards*. This year, we reviewed the final version of the math *framework*, a new draft science *framework*, and draft *Content Standards* in English and social studies. The standards have since been adopted, but the final version was not available in time for review in this report.

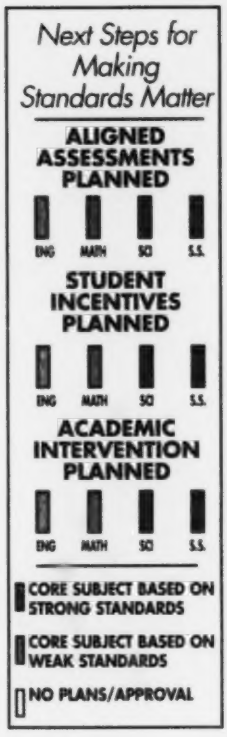
The *frameworks* are all broken down into K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters. The science *framework* has been improved slightly and it remains the strongest of the four subjects. It provides adequate guidance regarding what students should learn and it balances content and skills rather than stressing one over the other. The new math *framework* is nearly identical to the draft we reviewed last year. As a result, our judgments from last year carry over.

The social studies standards are fairly strong in some areas (history) but not very well developed in others (civics and geography). We consider these standards a "borderline" document that will need to be improved to be of maximum value to teachers and others in the future.

The English standards are the weakest of all of the subjects. Many of the standards simply repeat from elementary to middle to high school with no indication of how students' skills and knowledge should progress and build over the years. These standards need to be substantially reworked before they will provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	



Assessments: Louisiana's current assessments are not aligned with the new state standards, but recently passed legislation requires new assessments to be developed that will be aligned with these standards and given in the four core subjects at grades 4, 8, and 10/11. These new assessments will be in place by the 2000/01 school year. The current state-developed assessments are given to all students in the core subject areas in grades 3, 5, 7 and 10/11. Louisiana also administers commercially developed tests in English in grades 4 and 6.

Student Incentives: According to state law, students who do not pass Louisiana's state assessments in the core subjects in grades 3, 5, and 7 are not supposed to be promoted to the next grade. Students are also not able to graduate high school without passing assessments in the core subjects—English and math are given in 10th grade; science and social studies are given in 11th grade. According to state officials, 98 percent of the class of 1996 passed the exit exams.

None of these current incentives is aligned with the new standards, but the legislation mentioned earlier will require these incentives to continue when the new assessments are in place. The state will require that student promotion decisions be based, in part, on student performance on the new 4th- and 8th-grade assessments, and the new 10th- and 11th-grade assessments will serve as high

school exit exams.

Academic Intervention: Louisiana requires districts to provide extra academic help to students who fail any of the state-developed assessments. Even when the student reaches the passing standard on the tests, extra help is continued in order to ensure the student can maintain the grade-appropriate skills. The state provides oversight, funding, and technical assistance to districts for these purposes. The tests currently used to make the intervention decisions are not aligned with the new standards, but the planned assessments mentioned earlier will be.

Maine

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Maine's draft *Learning Results* in the four core subject areas. Science was the only subject that was grounded in enough content to meet our common core criterion. This year we reviewed a revised draft of the *Learning Results.* The *Learning Results* have since been adopted, but the final version was not available in time for review in this report.

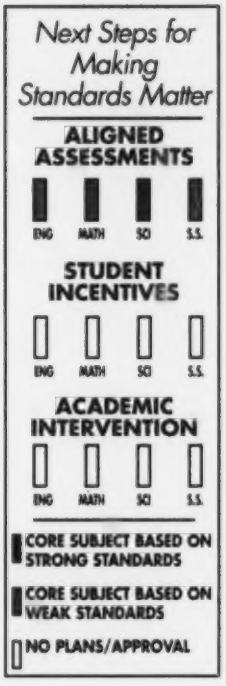
There has been a clear attempt over the course of the year to improve the standards in all four subjects. The standards are organized into PreK-2, 3-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters. The new science standards are an improvement over the previous version, and science continues to be the strongest of the four subjects. The standards are clear, focused, and well grounded in content.

The social studies standards and English standards also have improved this year but not significantly enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state. The social studies standards now pay more attention to history by listing the major periods that should be studied and mentioning some events within those periods. They now need to go a step further and elaborate on what is most important for students to understand about those events and periods. The English standards have added clearer and more explicit language about the characteristics of student writing in the different grade clusters, but they could still be clearer and more concrete in other areas. For example, the standards provide little guidance regarding the quality and complexity of literature students should be reading at the different grade levels.

The math standards we reviewed last year did not pay enough attention to the content students should learn. This year, "examples" of math exercises have been included with the standards, which helps to make them less abstract, but those examples are not considered part of the standards. The standards themselves need to be better grounded in mathematical content if they are to lead to a common core for all students.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

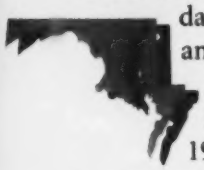


Assessments: According to state officials, Maine's current assessment system is aligned with the *Learning Results.* All students are assessed in the four core subjects in grades 4, 8, and 11.

Student Incentives: Maine does not currently have incentives for students to meet the state standards. There have been discussions about linking the high school diploma to achievement of the state standards, but no final decisions have been made.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Maryland



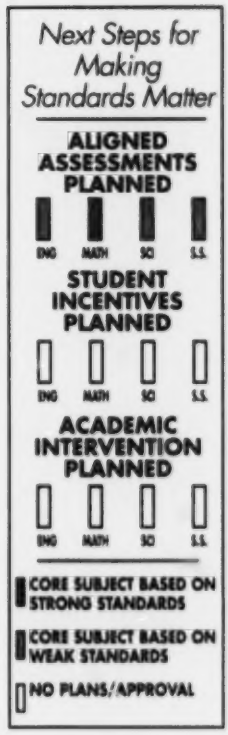
Standards: Maryland began its work on standards by developing *Learning Outcomes* and assessments for grades K-8. Several years later, the state developed *High School Core Learning Goals.* For our 1996 report, we reviewed both the *outcomes* and the *High School Core Learning Goals* in the core subjects.

The *outcomes* are different in both structure and quality from the high school standards. The high school standards are much clearer, more specific, and content based. Taken alone, the high school standards in each subject would meet our common core criterion. But with the exception of math, the K-8 *outcomes* are considerably weaker than the high school standards. When we look at the K-8 and high school standards as a whole in each subject, only the combined math standards are strong enough to provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state.

It is worth mentioning that Maryland is in the process of developing "clarifying" materials designed to elaborate on the *outcomes.* Given the broad nature of these *outcomes,* this is an important step for the state to take. The clarifying document in social studies was the only version available at the time of this report. While the information does help to flesh out the *outcomes,* it does not provide enough guidance in terms of what all students should learn about American history, Maryland history, and world history. Some examples of historical events and ideas are discussed, but history is not treated in a comprehensive enough manner. This may be due to the limited scope of the *outcomes,* which are not well grounded in history.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



Assessments: Maryland has state-developed assessments in the core subjects linked to the *Learning Outcomes* in grades 3, 5, and 8. The state is also developing end-of-course high school assessments in the four core subjects that will be aligned with the *Core Learning Goals.* The tests will be in place by 2001.

Maryland is also one of several states that has committed to giving its students national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math. These tests should provide the state with an opportunity to benchmark student expectations and achievement to a national standard.

Student Incentives: Maryland has exit exams covering reading, writing, math, and citizenship that students must pass in order to graduate high school. The tests are given in either 7th-, 8th-, or 9th-grade and they are not currently aligned with the state standards. The state is developing new end-of-course exams in 12 subjects aligned with the *High School Core Learning Goals.* A proposal before the state board would require students, beginning with the class of 2004, to pass 10 of the end-of-course exams in order to graduate. A final decision has not yet been made.

Academic Intervention: According to state officials, students who fail any of the current high school exit exams must be provided with intervention before they can retake the test. This program is funded by the state, but as mentioned above, these tests are not aligned with the standards. If passing the new end-of-course exams becomes a graduation requirement, extra academic help for students who fail those tests will also be required and funded.

Massachusetts

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed the *Curriculum Frameworks* in the four core subjects. English and social studies were in draft form; math and science were final. This year we reviewed the adopted English framework and a new social studies draft.

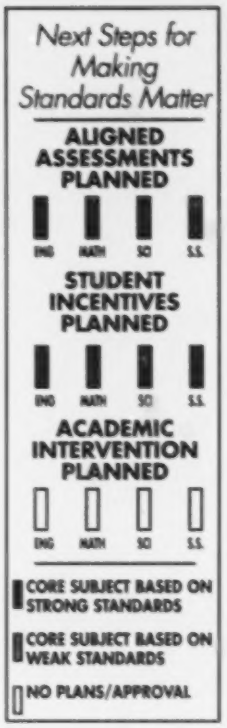
The frameworks are broken down into PreK-4, 5-8, 9-10, and 11-12 grade clusters. The science framework is the clearest in its presentation and the most grounded in content. It is clear and specific enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state. In fact, we consider the science framework "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states. The math framework is fairly clear and specific, but it does not provide the same level of detail and guidance as the science framework. We consider the math framework a "borderline" document that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future.

The new English framework is a major improvement over the version we reviewed last year. The overall structure is much more user friendly, and all of the major domains of a strong English curriculum receive adequate attention. The literature strand is among the best we've seen in any state, and it is helped by the inclusion of a sample reading list.

The social studies framework has been through many revisions since our last report. The version we reviewed this year shows a serious effort by the state to correct some of the failings of last year's draft, particularly the lack of attention to history content. The new draft has quite of a bit of content. In fact, it attempts to lay out a common core in history, and for that, the state should be commended. The problem now is that the framework has too many different sections serving too many different purposes and it is difficult to determine which skills and which content will be assessed by the state. The framework should be restructured in a way that preserves the focus on history but is easier for teachers and others to navigate.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



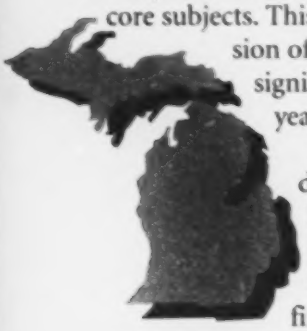
Assessments: Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, all students will be assessed in the four core subjects in grades 4, 8, and 10. These new assessments will be aligned with the frameworks. The state also uses a commercially developed assessment in reading in grade 3, which is not aligned with the English framework.

Massachusetts is one of several states that has committed to giving its students national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math. These tests should provide the state with an opportunity to benchmark student expectations and achievement to a national standard.

Student Incentives: Massachusetts is developing 10th-grade assessments that all students will be required to pass for graduation beginning in the 2000/01 school year. These assessments will be in all four core subjects and will be based on the 10th-grade standards. Students who pass the exams will be eligible to earn advanced certificates based on coursework above the minimum high school graduation requirements. The details on this are still being worked out.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Michigan



Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Michigan's *Model Content Standards* in the four core subjects. This year we reviewed a new version of the standards, but there is no significant difference from last year's version.

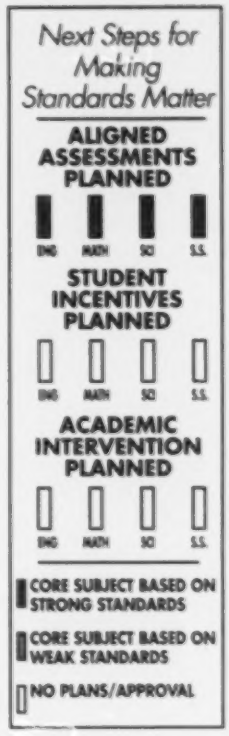
The standards are broken down into early elementary, later elementary, middle school, and high school clusters. The science standards are firmly grounded in content and are clear and specific enough to lead to a common core of learning. The math, English, and social studies standards are not as strong as science. While they touch upon the essential knowledge and skills students should learn by the various benchmark levels, these standards would be stronger if they provided more elaboration in terms of the underlying content students should learn. We consider the math, English, and social studies standards "borderline" documents that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: Michigan's state assessment system is currently being revised to align with the content standards. According to state officials, the assessments are and will continue to be given to all students across the state in grades 4, 7, and 11 in math and reading and in grades 5, 8, and 11 in science and writing. Social studies assessments will be added in 1999 also in grades 5, 8, and 11.

Michigan is also one of several states that has committed to giving its students national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math. These tests should provide the state with an opportunity to benchmark student expectations and achievement to a national standard.

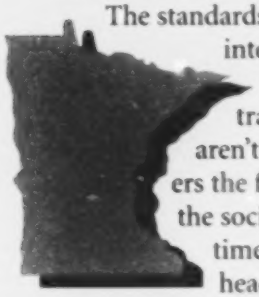


Student Incentives: Michigan has a differentiated diploma system. The 11th-grade assessments, which are based on the 10th-grade standards, are given in science, math, reading, and writing (social studies will be added in 1999). Passing these exams is not a requirement for graduation. Instead, students earn a state endorsement on their diploma for each subject area in which they attain proficient performance. According to state officials, 22 percent of the class of 1996 earned the communication arts endorsement, 48 percent earned it in math, and 32 percent earned it in science. The state has a provision that allows students to opt out of these tests at the request of a parent, but the state was not able to provide us with the percentage of students that have received "waivers." Because all students can graduate high school regardless of their scores on the 11th-grade assessments, we do not give Michigan credit for having incentives that motivate *all* students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Minnesota

Standards: For our 1996 and 1997 reports, we reviewed Minnesota's *Profile of Learning* standards.



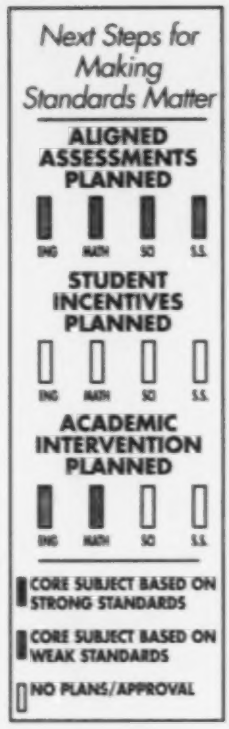
The standards are organized into primary, intermediate, middle, and high school clusters. Although the traditional names of the disciplines aren't used, the *Profile of Learning* covers the four core subjects. For example, the social studies standards are sometimes found under the "inquiry" heading, other times "peoples and cultures," and the science standards are sometimes called "science" and other times "inquiry." In our view, this attempt at integrating the disciplines makes the standards harder to read and the subject matter harder to decipher.

None of the subjects in the *Profile of Learning* is detailed and comprehensive enough to establish a common core of knowledge and skills for Minnesota's children. The math and science standards do a better job of highlighting the content students should learn than the other subjects, but not enough elaboration is provided. The social studies standards are quite vague and pay insufficient attention to history. The English standards are stronger in some areas than others, but too many things are left out. For example, there are standards describing some of the different purposes and styles of writing (e.g., academic, technical, business), but the standards do not deal sufficiently with grammar and mechanics.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

There is a separate set of standards in reading, writing, and math that students have to meet in order to graduate high school. These are called *Basic Requirements* and they provide the basis for the 8th-grade exit exams described below. The *Requirements* are clearer in math than in reading and writing but are designed for use by test developers. These standards do not meet our criteria and would need to be recast in order to be useful to teachers and parents.



Assessments: Minnesota's assessment system is complicated. Until very recently, the only tests all students were required to take were the high school exit exams given in 8th grade. These tests are not linked to the *Profiles of Learning* and are based instead on the *Basic Requirements*. Although the state created exams in these subjects, local districts could exempt students as desired and could use commercially developed or locally developed exams instead of the state tests.

In 1997, the Minnesota Legislature mandated, for all students in all districts, the current 8th-grade tests and new 3rd- and 5th-grade assessments in reading, writing, and math. The new assessments will be based on the *Profiles of Learning* and will be administered in the 1997/98 school year. New tests will also be developed at the high school level and will be aligned with the *Profiles of Learning* in the four core subjects. These tests will be in place in the 1999/2000 school year.

In addition to these exams, the state requires districts to administer "performance assessments" to high school students, which are based on the *Profiles of Learning*. As we reported last year, the state has created 150 sample "performance packages" which districts can choose to use, or districts can develop their own "packages." It was unclear to us last year how the state could monitor whether the standards were being met using 150 different "packages" and with the possibility of locally designed measures replacing these state "packages."

The legislatively mandated tests in reading, writing, and math may take care of that problem in at least those subjects.

Student Incentives: Minnesota has high school exit exams that all students take in the 8th grade in reading, writing, and math, but until recently, districts could substitute different tests and they could exempt students from taking the tests. Stricter requirements are now being phased in such that by the year 2001, all students across the state will have to pass the exit exams in order to graduate high school. In 1997, 70 percent of students who took the exit exam in math passed on the first attempt, and 68 percent passed the reading exam. Because the exit exams are "minimum competency" tests based on standards below a 10th-grade level, Minnesota does not get credit for student incentives in our analysis.

Academic Intervention: Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, any student who does not pass the high school exit exams after three attempts must be provided with extra academic help. When the new tests in grades 3, 5, and 10 are in place, districts can also choose to provide extra help to any students who do not perform well. Each district will design its own intervention program, which the state must approve before it will provide funding. Funding will be available for all approved programs, but districts will not be required to do this.

Mississippi

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Mississippi's *Curriculum Structures* in the core academic subjects. This year we reviewed a revised version of the English *Curriculum Structure.*

The math, science, and social science documents present standards grade by grade through 8th grade and then course by course in high school. All of these subjects are clear and specific enough to lead to a common core curriculum. The new English document is quite different. It is organized into K-3, 4-8, and 9-12 grade clusters, and contains broad statements that do not provide much guidance. Under each of the statements are grade-by-grade "objectives," which are much clearer, but these are only examples of how to fill out the broad statements. They are not considered part of the state standards. If the objectives were a part of the standards rather than options, the English document would be much stronger.

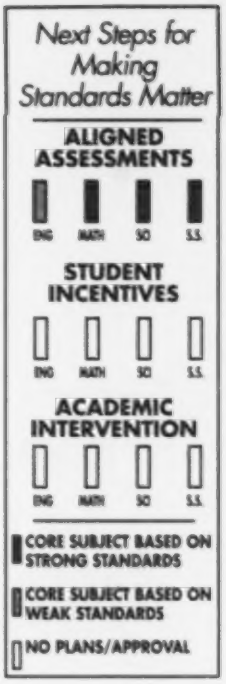
How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

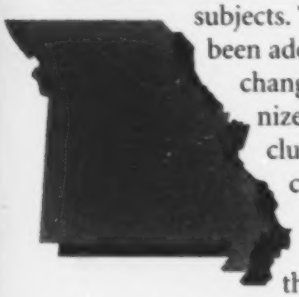
Assessments: Mississippi has state-developed assessments aligned with the *Curriculum Structures* in high school. All high school students take reading, writing, and math tests in the 11th grade and end-of-course tests in U.S. History, Algebra, and Biology. The state also administers commercially developed, norm-referenced tests in grades 4 through 9 in language arts and math. State officials claim that these commercial assessments are also aligned with the *Curriculum Structures.*

Student Incentives: All Mississippi students must pass exit exams in reading, writing, and math in order to graduate from high school. The tests are given in the 11th grade, but are based on the 8th-grade standards. Last year, state officials told us there were plans to upgrade the content of the exams to measure 10th-grade standards or above. There is continued discussion about this, but there has not been any action yet. There are no plans to develop exit exams in science and social studies. Because the exit exams are "minimum competency" tests based on standards below a 10th-grade level, Mississippi does not get credit for student incentives in our analysis.

Academic Intervention: According to state officials, students who fail any of the high school exit exams are required to be provided with extra academic help. It is unclear whether state funding is provided for this, and, therefore, the state does not receive credit in our analysis.



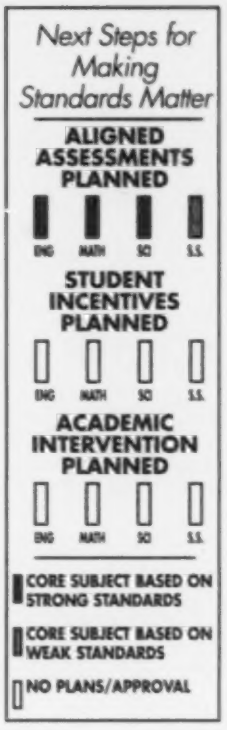
Missouri



Standards: In 1996, we reviewed Missouri's draft *Curriculum Frameworks* in the four core academic subjects. The *frameworks* have since been adopted without any significant changes. The standards are organized into K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters, except science which is clustered K-2, 3-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

The science *framework* is the strongest of the four subjects. It is thoroughly grounded in science content and does a very good job of describing how students should be able to apply that content knowledge. The other three *frameworks* are not as firmly rooted in the content of those subject areas. The social studies *framework* is quite lengthy, but there is no mention of any particular historical content that students should learn. History is presented more as a set of skills to be learned rather than a combination of knowledge and skills. The "communication arts" *framework* is stronger than social studies. While it does not completely leave out any important element of the subject (as social studies does), it does not address literature completely enough, nor is it very thorough or detailed about grammar and other writing conventions. The final version is clearer, but we still think it needs to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future.

The math *framework* addresses both content and skills, but there is a much heavier orientation toward skills. Many of the standards emphasizing math skills do so without adequate grounding in content knowledge, making it very difficult to understand what students are expected to learn. Although some of the "sample learning activities" included with the standards help make it clearer to readers the types of mathematical concepts and content students will need to learn in order to apply the discrete skills, those sample activities are included for illustrative purposes only—they are not considered part of the standards. For these reasons, we consider the math *framework* a "borderline" document that provides a good start but will need to be improved in the future.



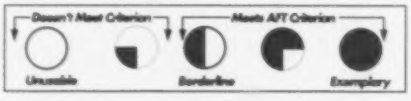
Assessments: Missouri currently uses commercially developed assessments that are not aligned with the state standards. In the future, the state will continue to use the commercial assessments, but officials claim these tests will be adapted to reflect the material in the *frameworks*. Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, math will be assessed in grades 4, 8, and 10. Beginning in 1999, English will be assessed in grades 3, 7, and 11, and science in grades 3, 7, and 10. Social Studies will be assessed in grades 4, 8, and 11 beginning in 2000.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



Montana

Standards: For both our 1996 and 1997 reports, we reviewed Montana's *Model Learner Goals* in the core subjects. Districts are required to develop their own standards, curricula, and assessments based on these *goals* by the year 2001. The state is planning to update the reading and math *goals*, but there were no drafts available for review in this report.

The *goals* are broken into what students should learn at the primary, intermediate, and high school graduation levels, but none of the subjects offers enough detail to provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state. The standards touch upon the important domains of knowledge within each subject, but very little elaboration is provided. The clearest standards in any subject are the ones for earth science, biology, chemistry, and physics at the high school level, but these appear to be optional for students to pursue. Montana also has *Curriculum Guides* in the four core subjects that are meant to assist districts in their standards development. The guides are resource materials only and are not part of the official state standards. The science framework is the only subject that is sufficiently grounded in content.

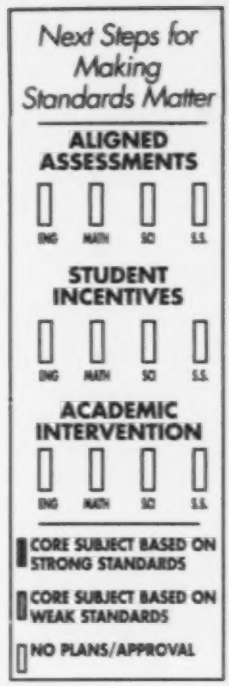
How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: Montana currently requires districts to assess students in grades 4, 8, and 11 in the core subjects using one of three state-approved, commercially developed assessments. According to state law, districts must also develop their own assessments aligned with their local standards. According to state officials, the current assessment system is under review for future alignment to the standards.

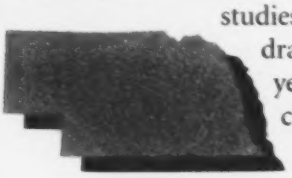
Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.



Nebraska

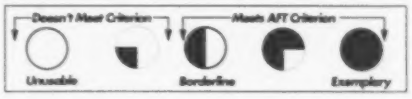
Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Nebraska's *Frameworks* in math, science, and social studies. There have been no new drafts since our report last year. According to state officials, there are new draft standards being developed in the four core subjects. We were unable to obtain copies of the standards in time to review in this report.



The math and science *frameworks* are broken into elementary, middle, and secondary clusters, but neither subject is clear and specific enough to lead to a common core curriculum. It should be noted, however, that the science standards are slightly stronger than the math, providing more detail and content, and breaking the standards into four levels—primary, upper elementary, middle, and secondary. The social studies *framework* is not grounded in enough content to lead to a common core core of learning as it pays insufficient attention to history in general and U.S. history specifically.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH	DOCUMENT NOT AVAILABLE	
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

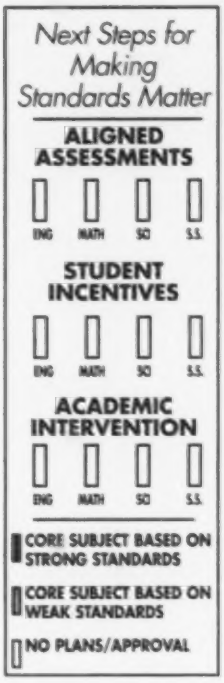


Assessments: Nebraska does not currently have a state assessment system, but there is a bill pending in the state legislature that would establish statewide testing beginning in the year 2000. The bill calls for the development of state assessments linked to the standards and given in the four core subjects in grades 3, 7, and 10.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



Nevada

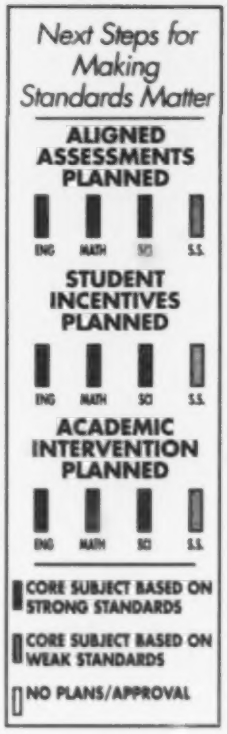
Standards: For our 1995 report, we reviewed the Nevada *Course of Study* in the four core subjects. None of the subjects was clear and specific enough to lead to a common core curriculum. Since then, the state has been working on new standards in the core subjects that will replace the *Course of Study*. In last year's report we reviewed a draft of the English standards, which, in our view, was not clear and specific enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state.

Nevada has just come out with new draft standards in each of the core subjects, which are contained in documents called *Frameworks*. The *frameworks* provide benchmarks for the end of kindergarten, 3rd grade, 5th grade, 8th grade and high school.

The science *framework* is the strongest of the four core subjects and is a significant improvement over the *Course of Study*. The standards are clear, specific, and well-grounded in content. In our judgment, the science *framework* provides the basis for a common core of learning across the state. The math *framework* is not as strong as science, but it is an improvement over the *Course of Study*. While the *framework* is organized according to the major domains of mathematics, the content within each of those domains is treated separately from the skills students should use to apply that content. This makes some of the standards seem abstract and process-driven, which in turn makes them difficult to understand. The math *framework* could be strengthened by embedding the cross-cutting skills within the content standards rather than keeping them separate.

The English *framework* is also an improvement over the *Course of Study*, but the standards need to be made more concrete in some areas if the *framework* is to lead to a common core of learning across the state. While the purposes of reading are clear in the standards, it is not clear how the skills and content should build and develop from cluster to cluster. The writing standards are stronger in this regard, but they, too, could be improved using concrete examples and detail.

The social studies *framework* is strong in some areas and weaker in others. The civics and economics standards are clear and well grounded in content, while the geography and history sections are less concrete and detailed. This lack of detail is particularly noticeable in history. While the major eras of U.S., state, and world history are listed up front, the standards do not elaborate on what about those eras is most important for students to understand. The standards would be significantly strengthened if they provided that level of concrete guidance.



How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	
SCIENCE	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	
SOCIAL STUDIES	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	

Assessments: All students in Nevada are assessed in grades 4, 8, and 11 in reading, writing, and math using a combination of commercial and state-developed tests. Currently, only the writing assessments are aligned with the standards. According to state officials, all the assessments will be realigned with the standards once the *frameworks* are complete. The state will also be developing new science and social studies assessments aligned with the standards.

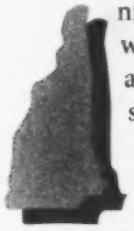
Student Incentives: Nevada has 11th-grade exit exams in reading, writing, and math that all students must pass in order to graduate. These tests

will be revised to reflect the 10th-grade standards once they are complete. By 1999, students will also have to pass science and social studies exams in order to graduate.

Academic Intervention: For years, the state has required districts to provide extra academic help to students who score below a certain level on the high school exit exams. Recently passed legislation will require districts to provide intervention to students who fall below a certain level on any of the state assessments from the elementary grades through high school. This new program will be funded by the state.

New Hampshire

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed the *Curriculum Frameworks* in the four core subjects.



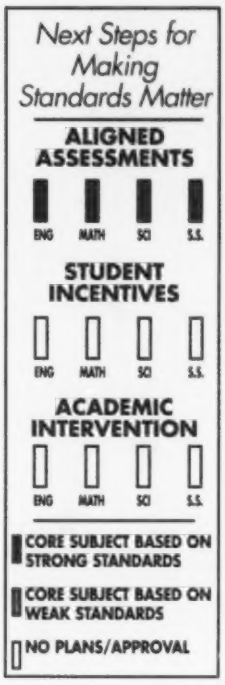
The *frameworks* in each subject were organized into three clusters of grades and all were clear and specific enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state.

The state has now put forward new documents in math and science, called *Addendums*, that flesh out the standards even further, providing content and skills for grades not covered in the *frameworks*. These new documents complement the *frameworks* very nicely and should provide a significant amount of guidance to teachers and others across the state. We consider the *Science Addendum* an "exemplary" document worthy of a close look by other states. It is not clear whether these supporting materials will be developed in English and social studies, but teachers would benefit greatly if they were.

Assessments: The state assesses all students in grades 3, 6, and 10 in math and English and grades 6 and 10 in science and social studies. The assessments are aligned with the *frameworks.*

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.



How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

New Jersey

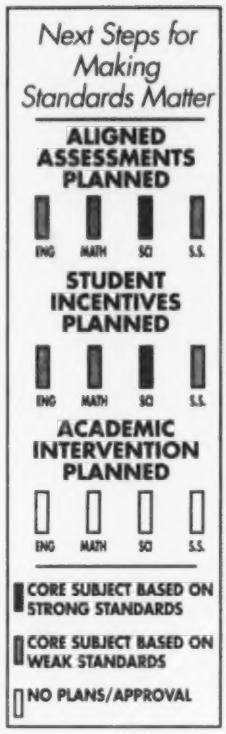
Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed New Jersey's adopted *Core Curriculum Content Standards* in all four core subjects. There were no changes to these standards over the course of the year.

The standards in all four subjects are benchmarked to the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades. The science standards are the strongest of the four subjects and the only one that we feel provides the basis for a common core curriculum. The science standards provide a considerable amount of detail and are well grounded in content. The rest of the subjects are not as strong. The math standards overemphasize skills without adequate grounding in content knowledge. The English standards are not clear and thorough enough to provide the necessary guidance to teachers, curriculum developers, and others. They are particularly weak in the areas of writing and literature. The social studies standards only list periods of American and world history that should be covered in the curriculum with very little elaboration on the particular events, issues, people, and themes that are most important to learn about within those periods.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

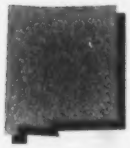
Assessments: Currently, New Jersey assesses reading, writing, and math in grades 8 and 11. These tests are not aligned with the standards, but officials tell us they will be over the next several years. The state is also developing new 4th-grade assessments in the four core subjects and new science and social studies assessments in grades 8 and 11. All of these assessments will be in place by the 2000/01 school year, and all will be based on the standards.



Student Incentives: New Jersey currently uses its 11th-grade assessments in English and math as exit exams that students must pass in order to graduate. These assessments are based on an 8th/9th-grade proficiency level, and they are not currently aligned with the standards. As mentioned earlier, the assessments will be revised to align with the standards and new science and social studies tests will also be developed. Beginning in 2006, all students will have to pass these new assessments in order to graduate from high school (this is five years later than the state told us last year).

Academic Intervention: New Jersey requires districts to provide extra academic help for students who do not pass any of the state assessments but separate funding is not provided, and, therefore, the state does not receive credit in our analysis.

New Mexico



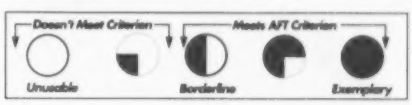
Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed drafts of the *Content Standards* in math, science, and English; the social studies standards were not available. Both the science and math standards provided enough specific content to lead to a common core of learning across the state, but we considered the math standards a "borderline" document that needed to be improved. The English standards were not strong enough to meet our common core criterion. The *Content Standards* in the four core subjects have since been revised and adopted by the state. We reviewed these new versions for this year's report.

The standards in each subject are broken into K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters. The English standards are the weakest of all the subjects. The language is vague and most of the standards are simply repeated in each grade cluster with no indication of how students' skills should build and progress over time. The social studies standards are heavily focused on skills at the expense of content knowledge. History receives particularly scant attention.

The math and science standards are clearer and more concrete than English and social studies, but both subjects could be improved by paying more attention to content knowledge. There is a tendency in the standards to emphasize how to apply knowledge without enough discussion of what the core knowledge should be. The science standards we reviewed last year did not have this problem to such a degree, but the new standards have reduced the attention to content.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

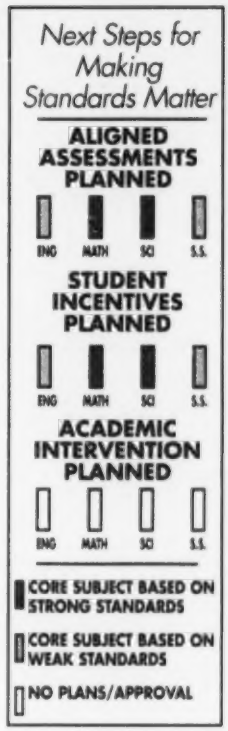
	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	



Assessments: Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, New Mexico will administer commercially developed, norm-referenced tests to all students in the four core subjects in grades 4, 6, and 8. State officials claim that these tests are aligned with the state standards. The state also has assessments in the four core subjects that are given in the 10th grade. Officials tell us that these tests are not currently aligned with the standards but that new 10th-grade assessments will be developed based on the standards.

New Mexico is also one of several states that has indicated it will give its students national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math. These tests should provide the state with an opportunity to benchmark student expectations and achievement to a national standard.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



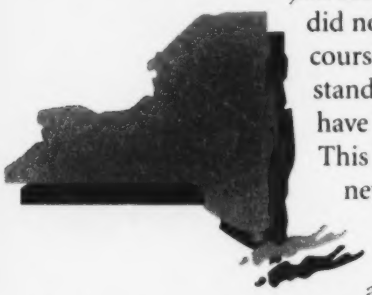
Student Incentives: According to state officials, New Mexico requires promotion decisions in grades 1 through 8 to be based, in part, on the state assessments. The state also has minimum competency exit exams students must pass in order to receive a high school diploma. According to officials, 92 percent of students in the class of 1996 passed the English test on their first attempt, 94 percent passed the math and social studies tests, and 93 percent passed the science test.

These tests are not aligned with the state standards, but the state is developing new exit exams that will be aligned with the 10th-grade standards in the four core subjects. The new exams will be in place by the year 2000.

Academic Intervention: Districts are required to develop intervention programs for students in grades 1 through 8 that do not meet a passing standard on the state assessments. No state funds are provided for this and, therefore, the state does not receive credit in our analysis.

New York

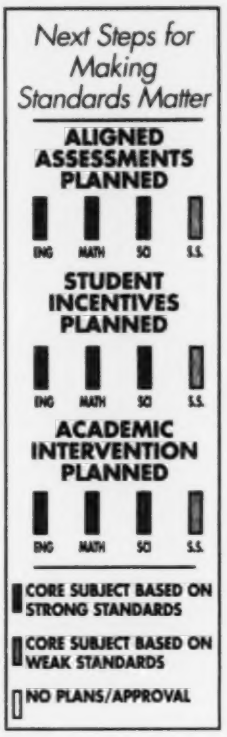
Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed New York's *Learning Standards* in the four core subject areas. Those standards did not change over the course of the year and the standards in all subjects have now been adopted. This year we also reviewed new *Resource Guides* in math, science, and English. These *guides* are meant to provide further elaboration on the core knowledge and skills students are expected to learn. The social studies *guide* was not available for review in this report.



The *Learning Standards* are organized by what students should know and be able to do in the elementary, intermediate, and commencement grades. Of the four core subjects, the science standards are the clearest and most firmly rooted in academic content. The math and English standards are not as clear about the core content and skills students should learn. The math standards emphasize how to apply math in "real-world" situations, but there is not enough elaboration on the actual concepts and content students should learn. The English standards are focused on the purposes and uses of language, and though they are quite strong in some areas, they could provide clearer guidance on such things as the quality and complexity of the reading materials students should be exposed to at each level and the quality of the writing that is expected. Although the social studies standards have sections on U.S. and world history, they are not clear and detailed enough about historical content to lead to a common core of learning across the state.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



In last year's report, we mentioned that New York would be developing *Resource Guides* to help flesh out the standards and provide additional guidance to teachers and local curriculum developers. This is a very important next step and one that teachers will very likely welcome. Since our report last year, the state has released *Resource Guides* in English and math/science/technology. While there is some valuable information in the *guides*, they are not easy to navigate. Most of the concrete information in the *guides* comes in the form of model local "scope and sequences" from various districts across the state. Some of those examples are quite strong. What is puzzling is how different they look from district to district. It is hard to come away with the sense that students across the state will be exposed to a common core of knowledge and skills. The *guides* also need to be clearer about the connection with the *Learning Standards* and with the state assessments. These issues will need to be addressed in future drafts if the *guides* are going to be of maximum value to educators.

For years, New York has also had detailed syllabi connected to the *Regents* courses and exams, which teachers have found very useful. The state is in the process of revising the *Regents* exams and it is unclear whether the state will continue to provide teachers with these syllabi once the new *Regents* tests are in place. Doing so might help take care of some of the problems raised earlier.

Assessments: New York is currently developing new assessments aligned with the standards in the core subject areas. Beginning in 1999, all students

will be assessed in grades 4, 8, and 11 in English, grades 4, 8, and 10 in math and science, and grades 5, 8, 10 and 11 in social studies. Until the new tests are in place, the state will continue to administer its current assessments in reading and math in grades 3 and 6 and in writing in grade 5. During the transition period, the state will also continue to administer the high school *Regents* exams and *Regents Competency Tests*, which are discussed in the next section.

Student Incentives: Currently, New York has a two-tiered diploma system. Students can either take *Regents* courses and exams, which have traditionally been considered for the college-bound, or they can take the less demading *Regents Competency Tests*, which are based on an 8th-grade performance level and given in the core subjects. Students must achieve a certain score on the *Regents* exams or pass the *Competency Tests* in the core subjects in order to graduate, and they receive a different diploma depending on which exams they pass. According to state officials, 98 percent of the class of 1996 who took the *Competency Tests* passed them. These assessments are not aligned with the *Learning Standards*.

New York is beginning to phase out the *Competency Tests* in order to require all students to take the more rigorous *Regents* exams. The state is in the process of revising the *Regents* exams in order to align them with the *Learning Standards*. A system is being phased in that will require all students to pass *Regents* exams in the core subject areas in order to graduate from high school. The graduating class of 2003 is the first group of students who will be required to pass the new *Regents* exams in the core subjects. The graduating class of 2005 will be required to achieve higher scores on those same tests. According to state officials, there will be a differentiated diploma system based on the new standards and assessments, but it is not yet clear what the different requirements for earning these diplomas will be.

Academic Intervention: The state requires all districts to provide academic intervention to students who fail any of the assessments in the elementary grades or who fail one or more of the *Competency Tests*. Funds are made available for these purposes, and, according to regulations, the parent or guardian of the student who is to receive remedial help must be notified in writing of the student's test results and of the remedial instruction plan. As reported in the assessment section, these tests are not currently aligned with the *Learning Standards*. According to state officials, intervention based on the *Learning Standards* will be required once the new assessments are in place.

North Carolina

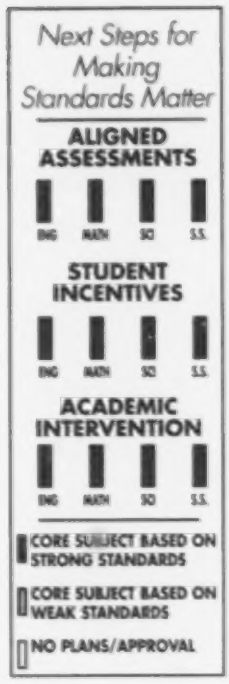
Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed North Carolina's *Standard Courses of Study* in the four core subject areas. The math *Course of Study* was the only subject that provided enough guidance to lead to a common core curriculum. After issuing our report last year, we were made aware of the existence of *Teacher Handbooks*, an additional resource in North Carolina designed to flesh out the expectations in the *Courses of Study*. We reviewed these *Teacher Handbooks* together with the *Courses of Study* in this year's report. The English and social studies *Courses of Study* we looked at this year were new drafts; the rest of the subjects have not changed since our report last year.

The math *Course of Study* continues to be the strongest of the four subjects. It is clear and well grounded in content from the early grades onward. The math standards help to define a common core of learning for students across the state.

The science and social studies *Courses of Study* are not as concrete and detailed as math. The science standards focus on how to apply skills and processes, with too little attention paid to the underlying content. The *Teacher Handbook* helps to flesh out the standards from the *Course of Study*, but the *handbook*, too, suffers from an overemphasis on skills. The social studies *Course of Study* is quite strong in the upper grades, where the standards are well grounded in historical content. However, the standards for the elementary and early middle grades do not provide that same level of detail. The social studies *handbook* does not attempt to further define the core content for those grades. We consider the science and social studies materials "borderline" documents that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



We mentioned last year that the English *Course of Study* discusses various aspects of teaching and learning but provides no standards. The revised draft also fails to provide standards for any particular grades. If teachers or parents in North Carolina are interested in finding English standards, they need to look in the back of the *Teacher Handbook*. Most of the material in the *handbook* contains sample teaching activities and lesson plans, but in the back, in an appendix, are grade-by-grade "benchmarks" that are quite detailed and informative about what students should learn. The benchmarks focus on reading and writing, and a reading list is included for each grade. This is the only grade-by-grade reading list we found in state standards documents and it is a very effective way to show the level of complexity of the reading materials students should be exposed to in particular grades. The benchmarks in the English *Teacher Handbook* meet our common core criterion.

Assessments: North Carolina currently has state-developed assessments that are aligned with the *Standard Courses of Study* and *Teacher Handbooks*. Students are assessed in grades 3 through 8 in reading and math, grades 4 and 7 in writing, and in high school with end-of-course exams in English I and II, Biology, Algebra, U.S. History, and Economic, Legal, and Political Systems. Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, the state will give reading and math tests in the 10th grade, which will also be aligned with the standards.

North Carolina is also one of several states that has committed to giving its students national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math. These tests should provide the state with an opportunity to benchmark student expectations and achievement to a national standard.

Student Incentives: North Carolina requires districts to take into account individual student scores on the state assessments when making promotion decisions. It is up to districts to determine how much weight to give those test scores.

Currently pending in the legislature is a student promotion bill, which would require students to meet established benchmarks in grades 4 and 8 in order to be promoted to the next grade. These benchmarks will be based on results from the state assessments as well as other factors yet to be determined.

North Carolina has exit exams covering reading and math that students must pass to graduate from high school. The tests are first given in 8th grade and are aligned with the *Standard Courses of Study* and *Teacher Handbooks*. According to state officials, there is some discussion of raising the standards for the exit exams to reflect the standards at the high school level.

Academic Intervention: North Carolina requires schools to provide extra help to those students who do not reach the proficient level on the state tests. The state provides funding and it is up to schools to determine how to use those funds.

North Dakota

Standards: In our 1996 report, we reviewed North Dakota's *Curriculum Frameworks* in the four core academic subjects. The frameworks were benchmarked to grades 4, 8, and 12 but none was clear and specific enough to lead to a common core of learning across the state.

This year, we reviewed a revised version of the math framework, which is a substantial improvement over the old. The previous version placed too much emphasis on abstract skills. The new version does a better job of embedding those skills in content, but it could still elaborate more on the knowledge and skills in each grade cluster. While the English framework is stronger than the social studies and science frameworks, none of them provides enough detail in terms of the content students should learn to meet our common core criterion.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

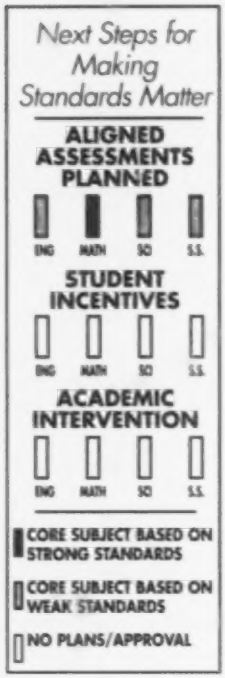
	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: North Dakota uses commercially developed, norm-referenced assessments to test all students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 11 in the core subjects. These assessments are not currently aligned with the frameworks, but according to state officials, they will be in the future.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



Ohio

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Ohio's *Model Competency Based Program* in the core subject areas. These standards have not changed over the course of the year.

The standards for all four subjects are organized grade by grade from kindergarten through 12th grade, but there is a significant variation in quality among the different subjects. The math and English standards are clear, detailed, and firmly rooted in content. We consider the math standards to be "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states. The science and social studies standards are not nearly as strong as English and math. The science standards overemphasize scientific skills and ways to apply science knowledge without adequately defining the core content students should learn. The social studies standards do not provide enough concrete guidance in terms of the history students should learn. Historical periods are mentioned here and there, but the underlying content is not treated in a systematic, consistent manner throughout the grades.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

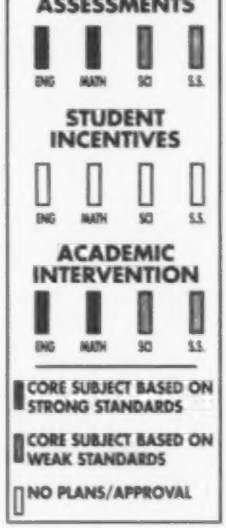
	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: Ohio's assessment system is aligned with the *Model Competencies* and tests all students in grades 4, 6, 9, and 12 in the core subject areas.

Student Incentives: Students in Ohio must pass the 9th-grade assessments in the core subjects in order to graduate from high school. The exit exams are based on the 8th-grade standards. According to state officials, 98 percent of the class of 1996 passed the tests by the time they finished 12th grade. Because the exit exams are "minimum competency" tests based on standards below a 10th-grade level, Ohio does not get credit for student incentives in our analysis.

Ohio also has a differentiated diploma system which awards a *Diploma with Honors* to those students who pass the 9th-grade assessments, complete certain courses, maintain a certain grade-point average in those courses, and then also pass the 12th-grade assessments. There is an allowance for students who do not pass the 12th-grade assessments to substitute a certain score on the ACT or SAT instead.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



Academic Intervention: Ohio requires that each school district provides academic intervention services for students who need extra help in grades 1 through 8. For grades 4 and 6, the extra academic help is based on student performance on the state assessments. According to state officials, the state provides funding for these intervention programs. It is also worth mentioning that there is a helpful section on intervention programs in each of the state frameworks.

Oklahoma

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Oklahoma's *Priority Academic Student Skills* in the core academic subjects. This year we reviewed a new revised version of the standards, but there were no significant changes that altered our judgments. Only the math and English standards are clear and specific enough in terms of the content students should learn to lead to a common core of learning across the state. The science and social studies standards tend to overemphasize skills and are not firmly grounded in content.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Assessments: Oklahoma has state-developed assessments aligned with the standards in the four core subjects and given to all students in grades 5, 8, and 11. The state also administers commercially developed tests to all students in grades 3 and 7 in those same subjects. These commercial tests are not aligned with the state standards.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: According to state legislation, any student who fails to meet the passing standard on any of the state assessments must be "provided with opportunities to receive remediation" during the following school year. Intervention is to continue until the student passes the assessment. The state does not provide funds for this extra academic help and, therefore, does not receive credit in our analysis.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter

ALIGNED ASSESSMENTS

STUDENT INCENTIVES

ACADEMIC INTERVENTION

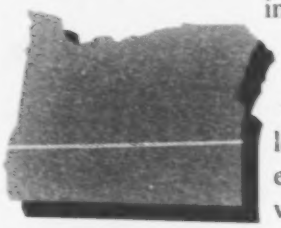
CORE SUBJECT BASED ON STRONG STANDARDS

CORE SUBJECT BASED ON WEAK STANDARDS

NO PLANS/APPROVAL

Oregon

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Oregon's draft *Content Standards and Benchmarks* in the core academic subjects.



The standards provided some guidance in terms of the content and skills students should learn in each subject, but not enough elaboration was provided to measure up to our criteria. The standards have since been revised and adopted by the state, and new documents, called *Teaching and Learning Standards*, are being developed in order to elaborate on the content and skills covered in the *benchmarks*. We reviewed these new *Teaching and Learning Standards* in English, math, and science for this year's report. The social studies materials were not available.

The Oregon *Content Standards and Benchmarks* have improved slightly since last year's draft, but they still do not provide enough guidance in any subject to lead to a common core of content and common expectations across the state. The real improvement this year comes with the new *Teaching and Learning Standards*. They provide that missing content and detail in a user-friendly format. The new materials are specifically designed to elaborate on what students will be asked to do on the state assessments at the end of grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. They are very clearly written and well designed, and they should prove useful to teachers and others who want to know more precisely and concretely what the state expects of students.

With the addition of these new documents, the Oregon standards in math, science, and English meet our common core criterion. Because the *Teaching and Learning Standards* are not yet available in social studies, our review continues to center on the *content standards* in that subject. As mentioned earlier, those *content standards* are not explicit and concrete enough to establish a common core, but if the materials under development are comparable in quality to the others we reviewed, the social studies standards will also provide substantial guidance to teachers and others in the state.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter

ALIGNED ASSESSMENTS PLANNED

STUDENT INCENTIVES PLANNED

ACADEMIC INTERVENTION PLANNED

CORE SUBJECT BASED ON STRONG STANDARDS

CORE SUBJECT BASED ON WEAK STANDARDS

NO PLANS/APPROVAL

It is also worth calling attention to another set of standards in Oregon that has been developed by the higher education community to serve as admission requirements to state colleges and universities. The *Proficiency-Based Admissions Standards System (PASS)* is a system of standards and assessments that is being aligned with the K-12 standards and will replace the more traditional set of criteria for college entrance such as course requirements. The *PASS* standards are clear, specific, and well grounded in content, although the social studies standards are not explicit enough about historical content. Oregon is one of the few states working to forge a strong link between the K-12 standards and college admissions, and the state deserves to be recognized for this.

Assessments: Oregon is in the process of developing assessments aligned with the state standards in the core subjects. These assessments will be given to all students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. The English and math assessments were administered for the first time this year; the science assessments will be given to students for the first time next year; and social studies will be assessed beginning in the 1998/99 school year.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

Student Incentives: The state does not currently require students to pass high school exit exams in order to graduate. Beginning in the 2000/01 school year, however, all students will have the opportunity to take the 10th-grade assessments in the four core subjects to earn a *Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM)*. While the state does not require districts to make earning the *CIM* part of their high school graduation requirements, districts are being encouraged to do this on their own. Oregon is also developing a second differentiated diploma that will be in place in the 2004/05 school year. A *Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM)* will be awarded to students who complete certain courses and pass 12th-grade assessments in the four core subjects. Because the only incentive for students is an *optional* diploma, we do not give Oregon credit for having incentives that motivate all students to meet the standards.

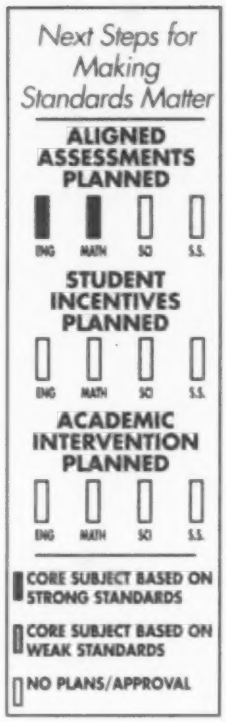
Academic Intervention: State law requires districts to provide "alternative learning environments" for students who do not perform adequately on the state assessments at any of the benchmarked grades. No special funds are made available for this, and, therefore, the state does not receive credit for academic intervention in our analysis.

Pennsylvania

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Pennsylvania's *Student Learning Outcomes* in the core academic subjects and *Curriculum Frameworks* in math and English. None of these documents was clear and specific enough to provide the basis for a common core of knowledge and skills. As we reported last year, the governor has created an "Academic Standards Commission" to develop new academic standards for Pennsylvania's children. We reviewed the final versions of the English, math, and science standards for this year's report. The social studies standards were not yet available.

The *Academic Standards* in all three subjects are benchmarked to grades 3, 5, 8, and 11, and they are a major improvement over the broad *outcomes*. The math and science standards are very clear and well grounded in content. They cover the major domains of the subject areas while providing explicit guidance as to what is most important. The standards in both subjects are written in concrete language that can be understood by both teachers and parents, and they include glossaries that help define the more abstract or technical terms. In our judgment, both subjects provide enough guidance to lead to a common core of learning across the state.

The English standards provide a good starting point by focusing on the key areas in that subject and providing clear, precise language about student expectations. However, these standards could be improved. Some of the standards are repeated from grade cluster to cluster without a clear enough indication of how those skills should build and develop over the years. For example, some of the reading standards are exactly the same for grades 3, 5, 8, and 11, with a note saying that the complexity of the text should increase. Those standards would be much stronger if they actually helped to define the level of complexity of the text students should be able to read at each grade cluster, thus differentiating between 3rd- and 8th-grade reading. The same problem exists with some of the writing standards.



Assessments: Pennsylvania's current assessment system is not aligned with the *Learning Outcomes* or with the *Academic Standards* being developed. All students are assessed in grades 5, 8, and 11 in reading and math. Writing is also assessed in grades 6 and 9, but not all students are assessed every year. Instead, one-third of schools are selected to be tested each year, such that students in a given school are only assessed once every three years.

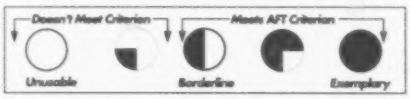
According to state officials, these assessments will be realigned with the *Academic Standards* once they have been completed. Officials reported last year that science and social studies assessments would be developed. This year, officials say they no longer have any plans to do this.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards, but the state board is currently discussing the issue.

Academic Intervention: None required.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



Puerto Rico

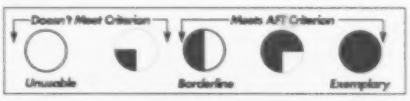
Standards: Puerto Rico has developed separate *Standards* and *Curriculum Frameworks* in the core subjects (Spanish is considered the core language), which have been designed to complement one another. We reviewed both sets of documents for each of the core subjects with the exception of Spanish. Puerto Rican authorities were unable to provide us with the *Curriculum Framework* in that subject.

The structure and quality of the Puerto Rican *standards* and *frameworks* varies from subject to subject. The math *standards* cover the major domains of the subject, but they emphasize processes and applications without adequate attention to content. The *framework* helps to provide some of that missing content, but the connection between the content and skills is not clear, particularly in the elementary grades. We consider the math *framework* a "borderline" document that will need to be improved.

The science *standards* and *framework* are the strongest of the subjects. The *standards* are stronger in the upper grades, where there is a balance between content and skills. The elementary *standards* are more heavily focused on skills. The *framework* is more consistent through the grades, paying appropriate attention to scientific knowledge and skills throughout. Although some of the materials need to be strengthened, the combined *standards* and *frameworks* in science provide enough guidance to lead to a common core of learning across Puerto Rico.

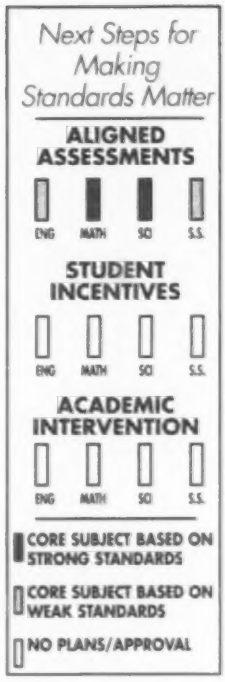
How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
SPANISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



The Spanish and social studies materials are not as strong as math and science. The Spanish *standards* touch upon some of the important areas of study, but others are not adequately dealt with. For example, the *standards* do not address the quality of the literature students should be reading at each grade cluster, nor do they adequately address the quality of students' writing. In our judgment, the Spanish *standards* are not clear and thorough enough to lead to a common core of learning.

The social studies materials also suffer from a lack of concrete, substantive guidance. Rather than defining the core knowledge and skills students should learn in history, civics, government, geography, and economics, the *standards* are written in broad terms that can be interpreted in many different ways. The *standards* use the term "history," for example, but provide very little direction to teachers as to what periods and events are most important for students to learn about. The same broad language permeates much of the curriculum *framework*, although there is better attention to history content in the upper grades. Substantial improvements would need to be made to the social studies materials in order for them to lead to a common core of learning.



Assessments: Puerto Rico has assessments in the core subjects that are aligned with the *frameworks* and given to all students in grades 3, 6, 9, and 11.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Rhode Island

Standards: In our 1996 report, we reviewed Rhode Island's *Frameworks* in math, science, and English. The math and science *frameworks* were finalized and adopted, while the English *framework* was still in draft form. The English *framework* has since been adopted. Rhode Island does not plan to develop a *framework* for social studies, but state officials say that other materials are being developed to help fill that void.

The format and quality of each subject *framework* is different. The English *framework* continues to be the weakest of the three subjects. Although the document improved over the course of the year with the addition of grade benchmarks—there used to be no indication of when students should learn the material—there is still a paucity of concrete, measurable knowledge and skills. There are very few standards within the *framework* that deal with reading, writing, and literature, yet these elements should be central to any strong English curriculum. No other state's English standards approaches these central areas with such indifference. In our judgment, this *framework* needs substantial reworking in order to provide the basis for a challenging common core curriculum across the state.

The math *framework* is stronger than English, but it, too, needs to be improved. Although the *framework* is organized around the commonly accepted domains of mathematics, there is not enough elaboration on the content students should learn within each domain.

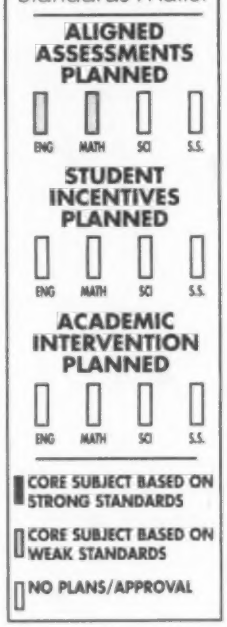
How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES	NOT DEVELOPING STANDARDS	

The science *framework* is the strongest of the three subjects. It is clearly written and it includes a significant amount of science content. It could be strengthened, however, by paying more attention to what students should be able to do with the content.

Neither the English nor the math *frameworks* are clear and detailed enough to provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state. The science *framework* does meet our criteria, but only by a very narrow margin. We consider the science *framework* a "borderline" document that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers, parents, and others in the future.

Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



There is another set of standards that has been developed in Rhode Island to help define a *Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM)* that students can earn in high school. These *CIM* standards have been developed by a state commission working independently from those who produced the *frameworks*, but the intention was to ensure a certain degree of overlap. It is worth mentioning these standards because although they could be improved, they are clearer and more grounded in content than the Rhode Island *frameworks* in most subjects. The *CIM* English standards are considerably stronger than the Rhode Island English *framework*, the math standards are somewhat stronger than the math *framework*, and the science standards are comparable to the *framework* in terms of the level of detail, though the format is very different. The *CIM* standards should also be recognized for taking up the subject of social studies, something the state is not intending to do in its *frameworks*.

Assessments: Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, Rhode Island will begin using new assessments aligned with the *frameworks* in math and writing in grades 4, 8, and 10. In the 8th and 10th grades, math will be assessed using commercially developed tests that state officials claim are aligned with the

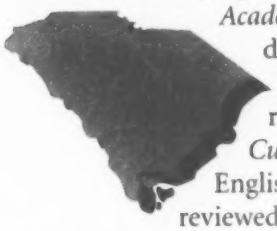
material in the math *framework*. Rhode Island currently assesses reading in grades 4, 8, and 10 using a different commercial assessment that is not aligned with the *frameworks*. The plan is to develop new language arts tests aligned with the standards by 1999. The state is not planning to develop science or social studies assessments.

Student Incentives: The state does not have high school exit exams or other incentives for students to meet the standards. As discussed in the standards section, there is an effort under way to develop the *CIM* that students can earn in high school, but students will not be required to earn the *CIM* in order to graduate. Steps are being taken to better align this certificate with the state *frameworks*, but as mentioned earlier, there is a real difference in quality in some subjects.

Academic Intervention: None required.

South Carolina

Standards: South Carolina began establishing statewide academic expectations for its students by developing *Curriculum Frameworks* and *Academic Achievement Standards* designed to complement the *frameworks*. For our 1996 report, we reviewed the *Curriculum Frameworks* in English, math, and science. We also reviewed the *Academic Achievement Standards* in English.



Over the course of the year, South Carolina has come out with new versions of the English and science *frameworks* (both are now final and adopted). The state also sent us *Academic Achievement Standards* in math and science. According to state officials, the social studies *framework* and *standards* will not be available until spring 1998.

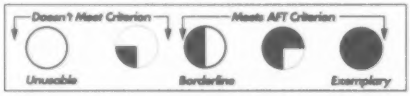
Both the science and math *frameworks* were clear and specific enough to meet our common core criterion last year and the addition of the *Academic Achievement Standards* makes those subjects even stronger. Both are written clearly and both do a very good job balancing content and skills.

The new, adopted version of the English *framework* is not significantly different from the draft we reviewed last year. When compared to the math and science documents, the English *framework* and *Academic Achievement Standards* pay considerably less attention to the content students should learn. Some of the standards are simply repeated in each grade cluster without much indication of development or progression as students get older. The English standards will need to be improved if they are to provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state.

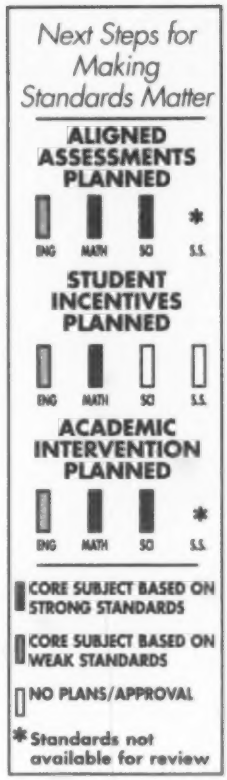
South Carolina is also in the beginning stages of developing *Grade Level Guidelines* in English, math, and science designed to break down the *Academic Achievement Standards* into grade-by-grade expectations. Only partial drafts of the English and math *Guidelines* were available at the time of this report, but it looks as if these documents will provide a considerable amount of guidance to teachers and others in the state once they are complete.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	



Next Steps for Making Standards Matter



Assessments: Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, South Carolina will field test new assessments aligned with the *frameworks* in English, math, and science. The new tests will eventually be given to all students in grades 3 through 11. The state will develop social studies assessments once the *framework* and *standards* are complete. According to state officials, the new tests will be in place by 1999.

Until the new tests are in place, the state will continue to use its current reading, writing, and math assessments in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10, and its current science assessments in grades 3, 6, and 8. South Carolina also administers commercially developed, norm-referenced tests in English and math in grades 4, 5, 7, 9, and 11, which state officials claim are aligned with the state standards.

Student Incentives: According to state law, student promotion decisions must be partly based on students' performance on the state reading and math assessments. Students are also required to pass the 10th-grade exams in math, reading, and writing in order to graduate from high school. The exit exams are based on an 8th-grade performance level and are not linked to the state standards.

Beginning in 2003, all students will have to pass new high school exit exams in reading, writing, and math in order to graduate. According to officials, these tests will be based on the 10th-grade standards. South Carolina law currently requires the exit exams to be administered in reading, writing, and math only. State officials have recommended that the legislature amend the law to include science as a part of the new exit exams, but there has been no decision on the proposal.

South Carolina is also developing a new advanced diploma that students can earn by completing certain courses and passing the optional 11th- and 12th-grade sections on the exit exams.

Academic Intervention: South Carolina has an "academic assistance" program that requires all districts to offer extra academic help to students who fail any of the state assessments. According to state officials, funds are provided for this program.

South Dakota

Standards: In our 1996 report, we reviewed South Dakota's draft *Content Standards and Benchmarks* in the four core academic subjects. The standards have since been adopted without any significant changes.

The South Dakota standards are organized into K-2, 3-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters, but they are quite vague and none of the subjects is firmly rooted in academic content. For example, although the social studies standards require students to learn about "history," there is scarcely a mention of learning any American history. None of the subjects is substantive enough to provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state.

According to officials in the governor's office, a review process may soon be initiated to improve the state standards. Officials are collecting exemplary standards from other states (as highlighted in our 1996 report) and other countries as the first step in this process.

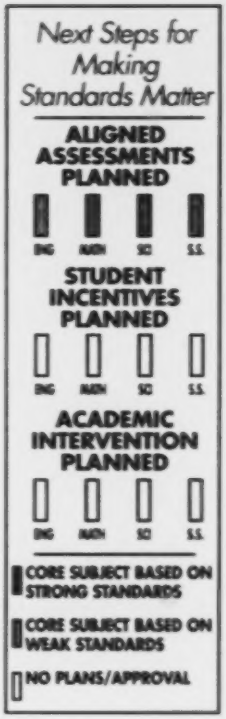
How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

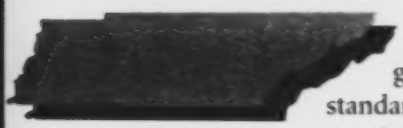
Assessments: South Dakota uses commercially developed, norm-referenced assessments to test its students. Currently, all students are assessed in grades 4, 8, and 11 in the four core subjects. Beginning next year, South Dakota will have new commercially developed assessments in place which state officials claim will be aligned with the *benchmarks*. The new tests will be given in the four core subjects in grades 2, 4, 8, and at the end of high school. A writing test will also be administered in grades 5 and 9.

Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.



Tennessee



Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed the Tennessee *Comprehensive Curriculum Guides* for grades K-8 and separate *Frameworks* for grades 9-12. All of the standards met our common core criterion last year, although the K-8 standards were stronger than those at the high school level.

This year, we reviewed new draft *frameworks* in the four core subjects. These documents are meant to replace both the K-8 *guides* and the 9-12 *frameworks* we reviewed last year.

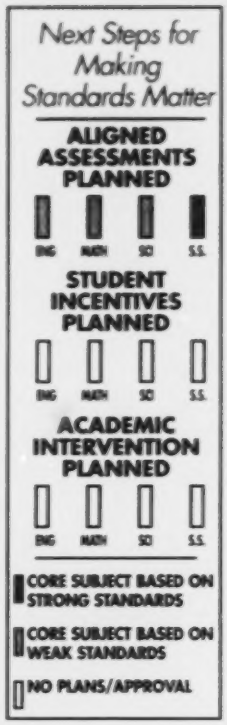
The new *frameworks* are organized into K-2, 3-5, and 6-8 grade clusters and are broken down course by course in high school. The English standards are the weakest of the four subjects. They do not provide enough concrete guidance about the quality of reading and writing expected of students, and many of the standards are basically repeated from grade to grade.

The math standards are stronger than the English, but the emphasis on applying mathematics tends to overshadow the math content that students will need to learn in order to use these application skills. The same problem exists in the science standards, and these standards also fail to establish a common core of courses that all students must take in high school.

The social studies *framework* is stronger than the rest. It provides a fair amount of guidance as to the history, civics, geography, and economics students should learn in each grade cluster, but more detail and elaboration would strengthen the standards and would help ensure that students across the state will be exposed to a common core of learning.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



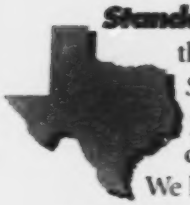
Assessments: Tennessee currently assesses all students in language arts and math in grade 9 and in writing in grades 4, 8, and 11. According to state officials these assessments will be realigned with the new *frameworks* once they are finalized. The state also administers commercially developed tests in grades 2 through 8 in the four core subjects. According to officials, these tests have been adapted to reflect Tennessee's current standards and they will be realigned once the *frameworks* are complete.

Tennessee is also one of several states that has indicated it will give its students national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math. These tests should provide the state with an opportunity to benchmark student expectations and achievement to a national standard.

Student Incentives: Students have to pass the 9th-grade exams in language arts and math in order to graduate high school. The exams are based on the 8th-grade standards and officials say they will be realigned once the new *frameworks* have been completed. According to state officials, 62 percent of 9th-graders passed the exams on their first attempt in 1996. Because the exit exams will be "minimum competency" tests based on standards below a 10th-grade level, Tennessee does not get credit for student incentives in our analysis.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Texas



Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed the draft *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)* in the core academic subjects. Over the course of the year, new drafts of the *TEKS* have been developed. We have reviewed those drafts for this report. We received a new draft of the English standards right before the report went to press, and we have tried to make sure the discussion below reflects the changes that were made in that draft.

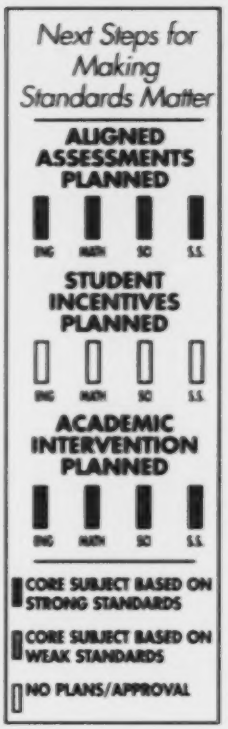
The standards in each subject are organized grade by grade through 8th grade, then course by course in high school. This is a change from last year's drafts, which were organized in several grade clusters rather than grade by grade.

The math, science, and social studies standards are clearly written and well grounded in content. The move to grade-by-grade standards helps to show a clear progression of content and skills in these subjects. The science standards have also built in more content in the elementary and middle grades, a definite improvement over last year's draft. The standards in each of these subjects provide the basis for a common core of learning across the state.

The English standards have some real strengths, but they are not as strong as these other subjects. Although there are now standards for every grade (rather than several grade clusters), some of the standards are repeated from grade to grade without showing how the knowledge and skills should build and progress from year to year. The result is that some of standards in kindergarten are exactly the same as standards in the 3rd grade, and some of the standards in 4th grade are the same as in 8th. The most recent draft of the standards (which we were sent just before our report went to press) cuts down on some of the repetition, so it is now less of a problem. Reading is handled very well in the early grades, and although earlier drafts did not pay much attention to literature in the upper grades, the latest version does give literature more emphasis. Most of the standards in the newest draft are clear and substantive, but there are still some standards that are less concrete and harder to understand, and repetition is still a problem. Issues like these will need to be addressed further if the English standards are to define a strong common core of knowledge and skills for students across the state.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



Assessments: All Texas students are tested in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and 10, writing in grades 4 and 8, social studies and science in grade 8, and Biology and Algebra in high school. High school English and U.S. History exams will be added in 1998. According to state officials, Texas will revise its current assessment system to align with the *TEKS* once they are completed.

Student Incentives: Texas has high school exit exams that cover reading, writing, and math and are taken by all 10th graders. According to state officials, the exams are based on an "early high school" performance level and students must pass them in order to graduate. According to officials, 89 percent of the class of 1996 passed the exams. The exit exams will be revised to align with the *TEKS* once they are completed. Because the exit exams are "minimum competency" tests based on standards below a 10th-grade level, Texas does not get credit for student incentives in our analysis.

Students who pass the English, Algebra I, and either the U.S. History or Biology end-of-course exams (mentioned in the assessment section) will be exempt from passing the 10th-grade exit exams. Texas also has an advanced diploma students can earn by taking certain courses and earning certain grades in those courses.

Academic Intervention: Texas requires districts to provide extra academic help to students who fail any of the state assessments. According to state officials, the state provides funding for this.

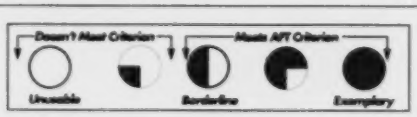
Utah

Standards: In our 1996 report, we reviewed Utah's *Core Curriculum* in the core academic subjects. This year we reviewed revisions of the K-6 English and 7-12 social studies *Core Curriculum* documents. The standards in all subjects are broken down grade by grade and are very specific about what should be learned. At the high school level, the standards are written course by course, and the state has a specified core of courses all students must take.

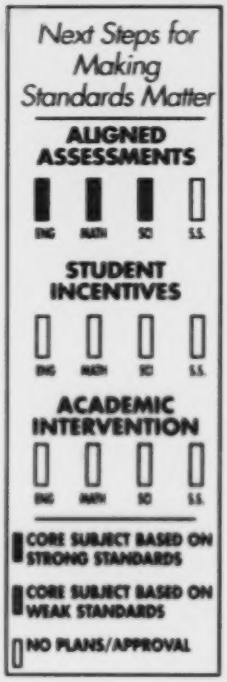
The new K-6 English *curriculum* is an improvement over the old version. The standards are more concrete, and more underlying detail is provided. The social studies standards, on the other hand, have changed significantly and no longer provide enough guidance to lead to a common core of learning across the state. The revised standards make very broad statements of what all students should learn, but all of the underlying content and detail is framed as an "example" of how the broad statements can be interpreted. In other words, districts and schools can interpret the broad statements any way they like. As a result of this change, the social studies standards no longer meet our common core criterion.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



Assessments: Utah has state-developed assessments aligned with the *Core Curriculum* in English, math, and science in grades 1 through 6 and end-of-course exams in math and science in middle and high school. The state also administers commercially developed tests in grades 5, 8, and 11 in the four core subjects. These tests are not aligned with the state standards, which means that the social studies *curriculum* is not assessed by the state. Although Utah's assessments are voluntary for districts, state officials report that every district uses them.

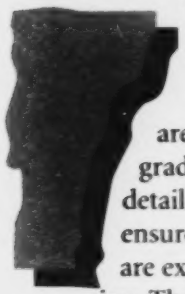


Student Incentives: There are no incentives for students to meet the standards.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Vermont

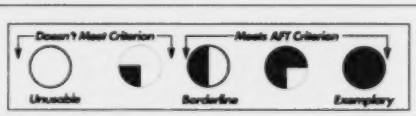
Standards: In our 1996 report, we reviewed a draft of the *Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* in the four core subjects. The standards have since been finalized and adopted.



The standards in each subject are organized into K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade clusters. Overall, they are not detailed and comprehensive enough to ensure that all students across the state are exposed to a common core of learning. The science standards are the strongest in this regard. They are clearer and more firmly rooted in content than the other subjects. The math standards include all of the appropriate content domains, but not enough detail and elaboration is provided in each area. The English and social studies standards are not as concrete and content oriented as math and science, and both subjects gloss over areas that deserve significant attention. The English standards offer very little guidance as to the quality of the literature students should be reading, and the social studies standards provide very little direction in terms of the history students should learn.

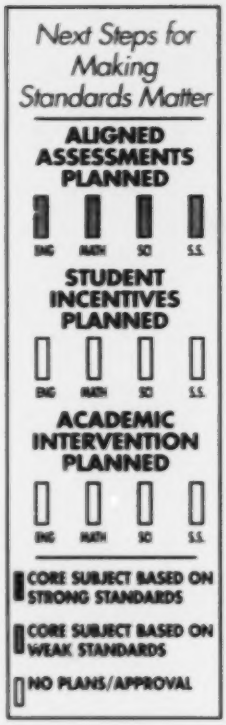
How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



Assessments: School districts in Vermont currently have complete autonomy in terms of student assessment. Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, however, all students will be required to take new state assessments. The assessment system will use a combination of commercial and state-developed tests. According to state officials, all of these assessments will be aligned with the state standards.

Students will be assessed in grades 4, 8, and 10 in math and English using commercially developed assessments. Students will also be assessed in science in grades 6, 9, and 11 using state-developed assessments, and the state is in the process of developing social studies assessments for those same grades. Due to funding constraints, the science and social studies assessments will be administered every other year. Social studies will be assessed in the years science is not.



Student Incentives: There are currently no incentives for students to meet the standards. Vermont will be developing a voluntary "Academic Diploma" that will be available for students in the 2000/01 school year, but it is not yet clear what students will have to do to earn the diploma.

Academic Intervention: None required.

Virginia

Standards: For our 1996 and 1997 reports, we reviewed Virginia's *Standards of Learning* in the four core subjects. All of Virginia's standards are presented in a grade-by-grade format at least through elementary school. The history/social science and English standards continue grade by grade through 12th grade; the math standards are grade by grade until high school, at which point the standards are arranged course by course; and the science standards are grade by grade through 6th grade when the format shifts to course by course.

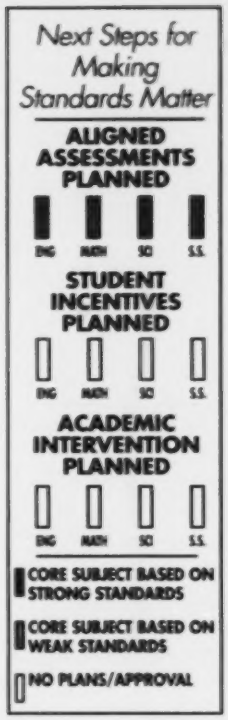
Virginia's standards are extraordinarily clear, focused, and well grounded in content. Their grade-by-grade and course-by-course structure ensures that they will be useful to teachers and other school staff regardless of the grade or subject they are involved in. Unlike some other standards that provide a lot of detail but seem overwhelming as a result, Virginia's standards are focused and digestible. They reflect some tough choices about what is most important for students to learn, rather than trying to cover everything. It is because of this combination of clarity, detail, content, and precision that we consider Virginia's standards "exemplary" and worthy of a close look by other states.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH	●	●
MATH	●	●
SCIENCE	●	●
SOCIAL STUDIES	●	●

Assessments: Virginia is in the process of developing a new assessment system aligned with the *Standards of Learning* in the core subjects. Beginning in the 1997/98 school year, all students will be tested in grades 3, 5, 8, and with end-of-course exams in high school.

Virginia currently assesses all students in language arts, reading, and math in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 using commercially developed tests, which, according to state officials, were chosen in part because of their correlation with the *Standards of Learning*. The state also has a high-stakes test, the *Literacy Passport Test*, which covers math, reading, and writing, and is given to students in the 6th grade. This test is aligned with an old version of the state standards, and authority has not been given to revise the test based on the new *Standards of Learning*.



Student Incentives: As mentioned above, Virginia has a high-stakes exam that students take for the first time in 6th grade (the *Literacy Passport Test*). The test is designed to measure 6th-grade proficiency in math, reading, and writing, but it is not aligned with the *Standards of Learning*. Students who fail to pass this exam by the end of 8th grade may go on to 9th grade, but they are not allowed to participate in certain high school extracurricular activities until they pass the test. The *Literacy Passport Test* also functions as an exit exam in that all students must pass it in order to graduate. Of all the states with high school graduation assessments, Virginia's are currently pegged to the lowest grade-level standard. In 1996, 70 percent of 6th graders passed the test on their first attempt.

According to state officials, Virginia is considering raising the graduation requirement from passage of the 6th-grade test to passage of a certain number of the end-of-course high school exams mentioned earlier. The state is also considering

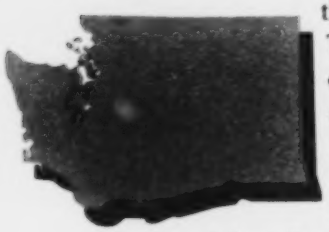
offering an advanced diploma to students who pass additional end-of-course tests. Currently, Virginia high school students can earn an advanced diploma by taking certain courses, but there is no testing requirement. Virginia is also considering requiring districts to use state assessment results as a factor in student promotion decisions. These proposals were all being considered by the state board at the time of this report, but a final decision had not been made.

Academic Intervention: According to state officials, Virginia requires local school boards to provide extra help to students who have not or may not pass the *Literacy Passport Test* mentioned earlier. The state also requires and funds intervention for students who perform poorly on the commercial tests in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. However, there is no discussion of requiring and funding extra academic help for students who perform poorly on the new assessments that are being developed to measure the *Standards of Learning.*

Virginia has recently decided to provide matching funds to local districts that want to provide intervention services to kindergartners or first graders who are not reading at grade level. The state is developing a "diagnostic screening system" that teachers will be able to begin using this fall in order to identify students in need of extra help. This is a purely voluntary program.

Washington

Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed the draft *Essential Academic Learning Requirements* in the core academic subjects. This year, we reviewed a new draft of the standards. The standards are benchmarked to grades 4, 7, and 10 in English and math. The standards for science and social studies have not been set to specific grade levels because there are not yet corresponding state assessments. The state says the benchmarks can be thought of as representing what students should learn by grades 4 or 5, 7 or 8, and 10.



The English and science standards were clear and specific last year, and they continue to measure up to our common core criterion this year. The English standards have been strengthened by eliminating elements that dealt more with social skills than academic skills. The science standards are more concise and continue to be grounded in content. Both subjects could be improved, however, by limiting the repetition. Some of the standards are repeated from grade cluster to cluster without making it clear how students' skills and knowledge should build and progress over time.

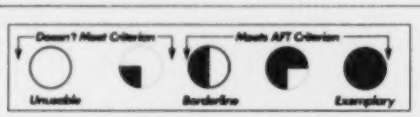
The new math standards are an improvement over the version we reviewed last year. More detail has been added, broad terms have been better defined, and repetition between the grade clusters has been reduced. There is, however, room for more improvement in each of these areas. The math standards meet our common core criterion but only by a narrow margin. We consider them a "borderline" case that will need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers, parents, and others in the future.

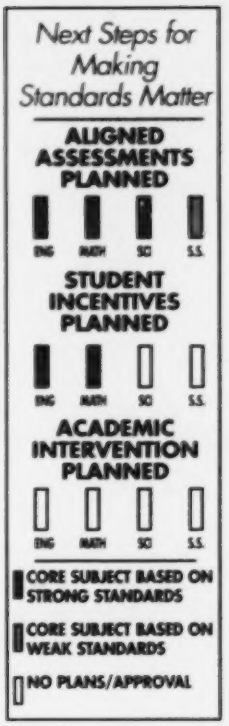
The social studies standards have improved in the areas of civics and geography, but the standards continue to pay insufficient attention to history. Although there is a separate "history" section within the social studies standards, and an attempt was made in this draft to provide more references to particular periods of history, the changes have not gone far enough.

The social studies standards are not clear and content oriented enough to provide the basis for a common core of knowledge and skills across the state.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		



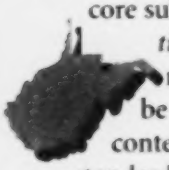


Assessments: Washington is in the process of developing new assessments aligned with the state standards in the four core subjects in grades 4, 7, and 10. In the 1997/98 school year, new reading, writing, and math assessments will be in place at the 4th-grade level. The remaining assessments will be phased in beginning in the 2000/01 school year. The state also administers commercially developed tests in reading and math in grades 4, 8, and 11. These tests are not aligned with the standards.

Student Incentives: There are currently no high school exit exams in Washington, but state law requires all students in the class of 2006 to pass exit exams in order to graduate high school. State officials plan to use the new 10th-grade assessments in reading, writing, and math for these purposes.

Academic Intervention: None required.

West Virginia

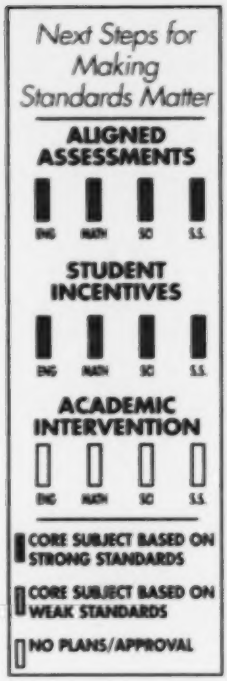


Standards: Last year, West Virginia was revising its *Instructional Goals and Objectives* in the four core subjects. Only a draft of the math *objectives* was available for review in our 1996 report, and we found those standards to be clear, detailed, and well grounded in content. In fact, we considered the math standards a model for other states to look at.

Over the course of the year, new drafts of the standards have been developed in each of the core subjects. All of the subjects are organized grade by grade from K-8 and course by course in high school. The math standards continue to be clear and detailed enough to lead to a common core curriculum. The rest of the subjects also provide a significant amount of detail in each grade, but are not as focused as the math standards. The sheer volume of the standards may lead teachers to wonder whether it is possible to work through all of the material in a given year.

The English standards are the most detailed of all of the subjects. They are written clearly and contain quite a bit of content and skills. Although they provide the basis for a common core, these standards could be more focused and consolidated, particularly in the elementary grades. The science standards are also very clear, and there is enough content to provide the basis for a common core. However, there are also quite a few standards that deal with skills and processes devoid of content. The standards could be strengthened if the connection between the content and skills was clearer. The social studies standards are clear, detailed, and grounded in content, but in some areas one gets the sense that "coverage" of various topics is more important than achieving a depth of understanding.

The West Virginia standards are a good start. They provide significant guidance for teachers, curriculum developers, and others who will be using them. The state now needs to make some tough decisions about what is most important for students to learn so that the entire body of standards becomes more manageable.



Assessments: West Virginia administers commercially developed assessments to all students in grades K through 11 in the four core subjects. According to state officials, the *Instructional Goals and Objectives* were specifically developed in order to align with the commercial tests.

West Virginia is one of several states that has committed to giving its students national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math. These tests should provide the state with an opportunity to benchmark student expectations and achievement to a national standard.

Student Incentives: According to state officials, promotion decisions are to be based, in part, on the state assessments. While there is no exit exam that all West Virginia high school students must pass to graduate, students who meet a minimal level of proficiency on the state assessments can earn a "warranty" with their diploma.

Academic Intervention: Schools are required to develop "improvement plans" for any student not demonstrating a minimal level of proficiency on the state assessments. No separate state funds are provided for this, and, therefore, the state does not receive credit in our analysis.

How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	
MATH		
SCIENCE	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	
SOCIAL STUDIES	DOCUMENT UNDER DEVELOPMENT	

Wisconsin

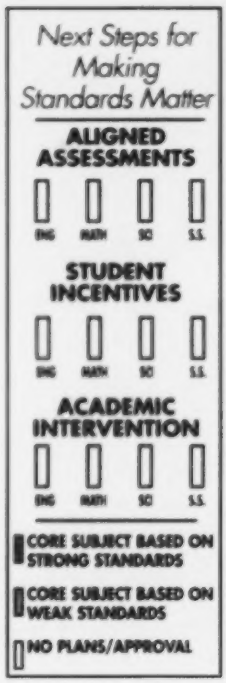
Standards: For our 1996 report, we reviewed Wisconsin's *Guide to Curriculum Planning* and *Content Guidelines* in all four core subjects. None of these documents contained standards that were clear and substantive enough to meet our common core criterion. This year, we reviewed new draft *Content Standards* in the core subjects that are intended to replace the documents we reviewed last year.

The new standards are a significant improvement over the previous versions in every subject except social studies. The standards in each subject are benchmarked to the end of grades 4, 8, and 12. The English standards are quite strong in the areas of reading and writing but literature is a weakness. The standards provide good detail about the quality of writing students should be producing at various grades and they pay good attention to grammar and other conventions. When it comes to literature, however, much less detail and direction is provided. The standards need to be clearer regarding the quality and complexity of literature students should be reading at various grade levels. Although the standards attempt to address this through reading lists, all that is provided is a bibliography of other organizations that have themselves developed reading lists. That is not enough.

The math standards are probably the strongest of the subjects. They are grounded in content and very well written. The standards cover the major domains of knowledge within mathematics, and they do so using detail and jargon-free language that can be understood by both teachers and parents. There is even a glossary in the back that defines the mathematical terms used in the standards. This is a very user-friendly document.

The science standards are not as easy to navigate. The standards consist of very brief statements with numerous footnotes. The statements themselves are not very guiding or substantive, but the footnotes refer to a section in the back that takes the broad terms used in the standards and fleshes them out in considerable detail. These footnotes are content oriented and come right out of the national science standards developed by the National Research Council. By flipping back and forth, one can find a fair amount of detail and content, but that does not make for easy reading.

The social studies standards are considerably weaker than the rest of the subjects, particularly when it comes to history. History is treated more as a skill to be used than knowledge to be acquired. In fact, the standards scarcely mention particular periods, movements, or events in Wisconsin history, U.S. history, or world history. Of course simply listing these things would not be enough. Strong history standards make clear what is most important for students to learn about particular events and periods, leading to a common core of knowledge and skills. One reason that history is underrepresented may be that the standards try to cover too many different sub-disciplines within social studies. Many states have standards in history, civics and government, geography, and economics, but Wisconsin goes several steps further by adding sections on sociology, anthropology, and psychology. We have not seen this in any other state. As a result of these problems, social studies is the only subject that does



How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH		
MATH		
SCIENCE		
SOCIAL STUDIES		

not meet our common core criterion.

Assessments: There is legislation pending in Wisconsin to develop new assessments in the core subjects aligned with the *Content Standards* once they have been completed. Until new tests are in place, the state will administer commercially developed tests in the four core subjects in grades 4, 8, and 10. The state will also test reading in the 3rd grade.

Student Incentives: There are currently no incentives for students to meet the standards. Legislation is pending that would develop new exit exams aligned with the standards once they are complete.

Academic Intervention: Wisconsin requires districts to provide extra academic help to elementary students who don't perform well on the 3rd-grade reading assessment. There is no separate funding provided by the state for this program. This intervention is not aligned with the standards, and state officials do not know if it will be in the future.

Wyoming

Standards: Wyoming is in the process of developing model standards in the core academic subjects. Once the standards are complete, districts will be required to develop standards that meet or exceed the state models. No drafts of the standards are yet available and it is unclear when they will be.

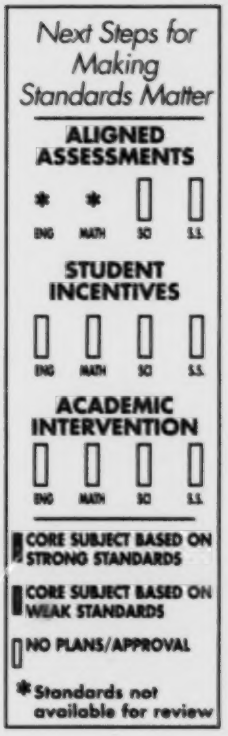
How Do the Standards Measure Up?

	1996 REPORT	1997 REPORT
ENGLISH	DOCUMENT NOT AVAILABLE	
MATH	DOCUMENT NOT AVAILABLE	
SCIENCE	DOCUMENT NOT AVAILABLE	
SOCIAL STUDIES	DOCUMENT NOT AVAILABLE	

Assessments: There are currently no statewide assessments in Wyoming. Recently passed legislation calls for the development of state assessments in reading, writing, and math in grades 4, 8, and 11. It is not clear if the assessments will be aligned with the standards.

Student Incentives:
None.

Academic Intervention:
None required.


Next Steps for Making Standards Matter
ALIGNED ASSESSMENTS
* * ENG MATH SCI S.S.
STUDENT INCENTIVES
ENG MATH SCI S.S.
ACADEMIC INTERVENTION
ENG MATH SCI S.S.
CORE SUBJECT BASED ON STRONG STANDARDS
CORE SUBJECT BASED ON WEAK STANDARDS
NO PLANS/APPROVAL
*Standards not available for review

V. State Responses

As an accuracy check and a courtesy to states, we sent our draft findings to each state superintendent and deputy superintendent one month in advance of our publication deadline. We asked them to tell us if there were any inaccuracies or inconsistencies so that we could make the necessary changes. We also offered to publish their responses in our report. This section contains those responses. In order to show which of the state concerns and requests led to changes in this report, we have placed a "†" symbol next to the corresponding text in the letters.

Alaska / Page 104
California / Page 106
Colorado / Page 108
Delaware / Page 110
D.C. / Page 112
Hawaii / Page 113
Indiana / Page 115
Iowa / Page 117
Kentucky / Page 118
Maine / Page 120
Maryland / Page 123
Massachusetts / Page 125
Michigan / Page 127
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Vermont / Page 158
Virginia / Page 160
Washington / Page 161
West Virginia / Page 163
Wisconsin / Page 164
Wyoming / Page 166

In addition to these 35 states, 14 others responded either verbally or in writing, but their responses were not publishable.

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EDUCATION PROGRAM SUPPORT

June 26, 1997

Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and update Alaska's state report for *Making Standards Matter 1997*. We have had several significant developments in Alaska's Quality Schools Initiative, which includes helping all students achieve standards, during the past year, and it is my hope that this letter and our phone conversations will clarify where we are at this time.

The following comments are all related to the Alaska section faxed to me this morning from your office, correspond to the sections of the Alaska report:

Standards:

As I stated in my earlier (June 13th) letter, we will be developing science performance standards and benchmarks, though there are no plans to test these from the state level at this time. Your report gives the impression that our Reading, Writing and Mathematics standards are completed, but they were given to you as drafts. The Mathematics performance standards are already moving to the next, 4th draft levels, and the Reading and Writing standards will have a second draft ready by the end of September.

Assessments:

Assessments from the state level will be developed only in Reading, Writing and Mathematics. It is true that our writing assessment is at grades 5, 7 and 10 and this assessment is aligned with state standards. It is also true that we have the publisher's sort on the alignment of the NRT given at grades 4, 8 and 11 with our standards, which is used in school, district and state reporting. The Exit Examination will not be a "10th grade" examination. It will be a graduation test in Reading, Writing and Mathematics, which students have the first opportunity to take in

their 10th grade year. This would be a most important factor for you to correct in the draft of Alaska's report which you sent to us.

Under **Student Incentives,** it is accurate to say that there are currently no incentives. The State Board had voted in January to begin a state board diploma of excellence; however, in this legislature, an exit examination was established. We will develop it this year, aligned to standards in reading, writing and mathematics. It will be given to 10th graders in field testing this next year, and, as you write, it will be required for students in the class of 2002 to graduate. The relationship of a state board diploma of excellence, and when this would be developed, will be decided this next year.

Academic Intervention:

It would not be accurate to say that the "state will require districts to provide extra academic help to students who fail any of the exit exams" at this point. What would be accurate to say is that the State Board will consider a regulation in September to require this. The regulation would, if the Board so directs, then have to go out for public comment, and the earliest it could be adopted will be November.

I am concerned that after the letter of June 13, the next draft which you faxed to me this morning still contained some inaccuracy, perhaps in drawing conclusions from the June 13 letter. Stating that the Exit Examination was administered in the 10th grade is a case in point. It is, but also in the 11th, 12th, and for three years after students exit school, as the law we faxed to you indicates.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide you with information. Your report, along with others which have been produced, such as that in Education Week, have been read with interest by Alaskans, and it is certainly our hope that we can provide citizens and professionals with the most up-to-date information. If you need additional clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Nancy A. Buell, Ed.D.
Director

Faxed to 202-879-4537
sent by electronic mail to mgandal@aft.org

cc: Shirley J. Holloway, Commissioner

G:director:nancy:doe:aft1997

California

[redacted]

DELAINE EASTIN
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

June 27, 1997

Dr. Matt Gandal
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Dr. Gandal:

Thank you for the significant assistance you have given California in moving toward standards. We deeply appreciate the time and resources you have provided to the California Department of Education and the Commission for the Establishment of Academic and Performance Standards. As you note in the California report, the standards development process is well underway. State Superintendent Delaine Eastin and Governor Pete Wilson have worked collaboratively to meet the timelines and expectations established in the legislation enacted 18 months ago. The first draft standards in reading, writing, and mathematics are in public hearings, and will be finalized and presented to the State Board of Education in October 1997.

California has been able to build upon the work of other states and nations in developing its own standards, and the work done by the American Federation of Teachers to report on and rate the standards in other states has been most helpful to us. As you have noted, the first draft standards produced by the Superintendent's Challenge Network have helped to develop a foundation for the new California standards.

So also have the Education Round Table Standards, which brought all segments of higher education into the discussion of what students should know and be able to do when they leave high school. These standards have now been endorsed by the Academic Senates of the University of California, California State University, and the California Community Colleges as well as the University of California Regents and the Trustees of the California State Universities and the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. Such early efforts have built capacity and readiness for the standards discussion in California. This contribution cannot be underestimated.

To prepare all schools for standards-based accountability, the California Department of Education produced a teleconference on standards-based accountability using multiple measures. The schools in California will convert to a standards-based reporting of numbers of students meeting or exceeding standards beginning in Fall 1997.

We are confident that California will continue to make great strides in implementing standards, assessment, and accountability and look forward to your continued assistance in this important work.

Sincerely,

Ruth Ann McKenna
Chief Deputy Superintendent for Educational Policy,
Curriculum and Department Management

RAM:rh

Colorado

STATE OF COLORADO

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
136 State Capitol
Denver, Colorado 80203-1792
Phone (303) 866-2471

Roy Romer
Governor

June 26, 1997

Matthew Gandel
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gandel:

We appreciate Colorado's inclusion in the American Federation of Teacher's 1997 Making Standards Matter document. We are convinced that educational standards are essential to preparing our students for the future, and assessment is a critical piece of this concept.

Troubling national trends indicate we are failing students by not preparing them to live, learn, and work in an ever-changing world. To counter this trend, we believe that the first essential step in raising student achievement is to clearly define educational goals – what every student knows and is able to do in order to be successful – and then construct a way to meet these standards.

On January 1, 1997, all 176 Colorado school districts had in place standards which meet or exceed the level of those developed by the state. Preliminary results from these school districts imply that uniform standards not only raise student achievement, but also close gaps between various ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Implementing standards is the first, but certainly not the only element, involved in raising student achievement. We must also assess the knowledge of every student to ensure they have reached the level of understanding dictated by content standards. Obtaining a clear picture of what a student knows and is able to do will not only provide accountability, but more importantly, it will enable teachers and parents to identify areas where students may be deficient.

This year, Colorado implemented a statewide assessment system which will be phased in over the next five years. We will eventually test all third graders in reading, all fourth graders in reading and writing, all fifth graders in math, and all eighth graders in math and science.

Thanks again for including in Colorado in your report. We are pleased with our state's progress toward implementing meaningful standards and assessments for all students.

Sincerely,

Roy Romer
Governor

Rich Laughlin
Acting Education Commissioner

STATE OF DELAWARE

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EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN DELAWARE
- MAKING A GOOD SCHOOL SYSTEM BETTER -

By: Iris T. Metts, Ed.D.
Secretary of Education
State of Delaware

Nearly five years ago Delaware set out to dramatically change its educational structure. The reform began from a very simple concept that holds true today - if we set high expectations of our students and give them the resources, skills, and opportunity necessary to succeed, their performance will improve. Fundamental to this concept is our belief that no child is a lost cause - *all children can learn.*

Our first order of business was to create rigorous academic standards in the four core content areas of English language arts, science, mathematics and social studies. These Standards needed to clearly define what our children should know and be able to do at different grade levels. With the help of countless Delaware teachers, education professionals, parents, legislators and members of the business community, we created top-notch Standards that are widely recognized as among the best in the Nation.

Essential to the successful implementation of these Standards is their alignment with daily classroom instruction. To further facilitate that process, during the Summer and Fall of 1997, the State Department of Education will assist local districts in developing curriculum guidelines and lessons to help align their teaching more closely with the high Standards. Staff development will be available to all teachers to assist them with implementation. The Department, in concert with the Delaware Center for Educational Technology (DCET), has already been working to infuse technology into classroom instruction with the purpose of sharing and modeling exceptional instructional practices via the computer.

Our next step has already begun. For some time, we have been designing the Delaware State Testing Program (DSTP) which will measure how our students and schools are progressing towards those Standards. During the third week of May, we conducted the first round of field testing in English language arts and mathematics. Actual testing will begin on schedule in the Spring of 1998. Recently we have proposed the inclusion of

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DEPARTMENT FAX: (302) 739 - 4654

nationally-normed test items into that assessment to give us an accurate measure of how our students compare to students in other states, while offering an added level of reliability.

It is important to mention that the inclusion of nationally-normed items does *not* mean we are abandoning the reform or watering down the Delaware Content Standards - quite the opposite. We intend to build upon the success of these highly acclaimed Standards and continue to use them as the core of all future efforts. In addition to this enhanced test, achievement will also be measured by a national test such as our current national assessment, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) or the new test proposed by the President. Also, performance indicators available on-line at every level of instruction. Too much is at stake to rely on one singular method of measuring progress.

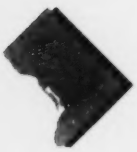
As a natural extension of a strong assessment program, we intend to develop an inclusive, thorough, and equitable accountability system to ensure that all of our children are well prepared to meet the many challenges that lie ahead. Simply put, whether you are a parent, teacher, legislator, employer or tax-paying citizen, you want and deserve some assurance that when students emerge from our public schools as young adults, they are well equipped to enter into a college or a career. The design of this system will answer three basic questions - whom will we hold accountable, how will we measure progress, and what will be the consequences - both positive and negative.

We believe that the DSTP will be the primary indicator of success, but a comprehensive accountability structure will also take into account such factors as staff and student attendance, retention and drop-out rates, advanced course enrollment, school discipline incidents, course completion and grades to name a few. Recently legislation has been introduced in the Delaware General Assembly that would set the accountability process in motion. The bill requires that the DSTP be designed to support systemic accountability for both students and educators, and mandates that students must demonstrate proficiency in order to receive a high school diploma.

This oversimplification of the process actually represents a very complicated and often cumbersome process of school change. We are indeed ahead of our time. Six weeks ago when I began my tenure as Secretary of Education, I was the fortunate recipient of years of hard work from two dedicated Governors, the State Board of Education and education professionals throughout the State. The success we have enjoyed is largely due to their vision and leadership. But now, we must build upon that rock solid foundation and continue to move forward.

As the Department of Education, it is incumbent upon us to take the lead. In the next few months we will take some very proactive and concrete steps in the area of assessment and accountability. By December, an outline of our plan will be ready for the Governor as he prepares his 1998 State of the State Address. Although this approach may seem aggressive and ambitious to some, I believe the time to act is now. We owe it to the teachers, administrators, parents, community members and business leaders who've worked diligently to create this solid foundation - but most importantly we owe it to our children. I am confident that we are advancing in the most appropriate and beneficial direction. The State of Delaware is poised to become a national leader in educational reform. Together we will prevail and in doing so, guarantee an even brighter future for the children of our State.

District of Columbia



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Chief Academic Officer
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Suite 805
Washington, D.C. 20004
(202) 724-4099
Fax (202) 727-2983

June 25, 1997

Mr. Mathew Gandal, Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to review the AFT analysis of the status of the District of Columbia Public Schools' (DCPS) standards development and implementation. This information contained in your *Making Standards Matter* is valuable to us as it is to others because it provides a good summary of the status of this work around the country.

In order to insure that AFT, states, districts, policy makers, and other audiences have a clear picture of the current status and work in progress, we are sending this update letter.

All the DCPS framework documents are works-in-progress. The English Language Arts and History Framework is in First Edition. The Mathematics, Science, and Technology Framework Document is a Revised Edition. Although we are gratified that you find our history standards exemplary, we are always concerned about improving the quality of **all** our standards. As part of our on-going process to improve, the content standards are being examined as part of a linking contract with the New Standards Project. We anticipate that the DCPS mathematics standards may fall short of the specificity and clarity of the New Standards Mathematics Standards. In such a case, we plan to clarify and fill in gaps.

Another purpose of the New Standards linking contract is ascertaining whether the match warrants using New Standards Assessments as part of the DCPS Comprehensive Assessment System which is in development and will be aligned with the content standards. The Comprehensive Assessment System will include promotion and graduation policy based on state standards as well as multiple forms of assessment. DCPS is also researching criteria for differentiated diplomas.

The Draft DCPS Resource Guide will be shared at a mandatory three-day Principals' Institute, this month, focused on standards and assessments. The contents of the Resource Guide include standards-based grade-by-grade and core course guidelines and sample secondary course syllabi. Also included are annotated reading lists and alignments of standards with state adopted textbooks.

We hope this gives you a clearer picture of our direction, and thank you again for your continued good work in the service of teachers and children.

Sincerely Yours,

Mildred L Musgrove

Dr. Mildred Musgrove
Chief Academic Officer (Acting)
District of Columbia Public Schools

BENJAMIN J. CAYETANO
GOVERNOR

HERMAN M. AIZAWA, Ph.D.
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND SCHOOL
INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

June 20, 1997

American Federation of Teachers
Attention: Matthew Gandal
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Gentlemen:

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to share any problems or concerns I may have with the information about Hawaii that will be included in your forthcoming report on standards and assessments. In the interest of maintaining a continuing dialogue with you, I will comment frankly.

The section on standards I find to be accurate and fair. The section on assessments, however, contains gross inaccuracies. While the statement that Hawaii plans to develop a new assessment system that will be aligned with the standards is accurate, it does not tell the whole story. What was explained to [the AFT] at some length and with some care was that Hawaii will use a two-tiered approach to student assessment consisting of a school/classroom assessment program and a state-level assessment program. The school/classroom assessment program will be oriented toward internal stakeholder's interests, i.e., feedback for monitoring ongoing instruction and helping individual student's learning progress. The state-level assessment program will be oriented toward external stakeholders' interests and accountability, monitoring and reporting performance by schools and statewide. Both tiers will be aligned with the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards.

The state-level program will have two major parts: (1) a norm-referenced assessment in reading and math that would be applied to all students statewide in selected grades levels, including at least one grade level in elementary, intermediate/middle, and high schools, and (2) content area performance assessments in social studies, science, and literature that would apply to all students in a statewide sample of schools, including one grade level in elementary, intermediate/middle, and high schools, on a recurring cyclical schedule. The latter would reference the state's standards. Some initial work on a content area performance assessment in social studies (integrated history--Hawaiian history and U.S. history--and reading/writing) was begun two years ago in collaboration with the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

(CRESST). That work was put on hold this past year, but with Title I funds, development work will start up again in July 1997. The pace of the development work will be determined in large measure by the Department's ability to secure additional funding support from the State Legislature.

Currently, high school seniors must have passed the Hawaii State Test of Essential Competencies to graduate. The state-developed test, which now covers 16 competencies, is administered to all grade 10 students. Since it was developed prior to the standards, it references the standards but only partially. In truth, items better match the "old" Essential Competencies that have been superseded by the "new" standards. While a preferable course of action would be to develop a brand new high school graduation test based on the current standards, development funds would be hard to come by, especially in light of the protracted downturn in total state revenues.

Hopefully, this information will allow you to more accurately reflect what is happening in Hawaii. Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Kenneth K. Yamamoto
Assistant Superintendent

HMA:lu

c: Dr. Herman M. Aizawa, Superintendent
Office of Accountability and School
Instructional Support

Indiana Department of Education

Center for School Improvement and Performance
Room 229, State House - Indianapolis, IN 46204-2798
Telephone: 317/232-9100

June 23, 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
American Federation of Teachers
Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

The efforts of the American Federation of Teachers to focus on the importance of standards deserves high praise.

The entire education community recognizes the need for standards. The question of who will determine the standards remains. Local teachers, parents, administrators, business and industry, community members, and students must engage in conversation essential to understand and support the standards.

The *Indiana Curriculum Proficiency Guides* provide guidance to teachers as they develop curriculum and implement the content standards. The foundation of the Indiana content standards does not embrace a lockstep approach to a curriculum. We believe that it is the responsibility of teachers, working with one another and with others (parents, business, community), to break the curriculum down to the specifics of content, guided by the processes and ideas provided in our proficiency guides. We support schools in working through their beliefs and creating the working curriculum that fulfills all of the expectations expressed in the *Indiana Curriculum Proficiency Guides*.

At this point I will address the comments made on your June 11 draft:

Standards

1. The "navigation" difficulties you encountered in the mathematics guide do not appear to be justified. The clear and consistent organization of sequential topics throughout the document contributes to its "user-friendly" nature. "Exemplary!" is still appropriate.

2. The science guide provides an excellent treatment of the many complex standards that support a meaningful science program. It is important to note that the writers used international standards (from AFT materials) in the development of the guide. Your comments do not reflect the quality of the document.

3. The social studies guide includes "Historical Perspectives" within **each grade's** focus of learning. The developers of the guide, reviewers of the initial drafts, and teachers using it believe the extent of history coverage is appropriate.

Office Location - Two Market Square Center - 251 East Ohio Street

4. The *English/Language Arts Proficiency Guide*, developed in 1992, provides the developmental framework that contributes to local curriculum development. This guide has been supplemented by *Indiana High School English/Language Arts Competencies* — a guide developed in response to the Indiana Core 40 program. The Core 40 program requires students to complete high school courses that meet the standards established by high school teachers and university faculty in the core areas. The *Competencies* are stated for grades 9-12 and describe the high expectations of a high school graduate who is going to college or a technical institute.

Clearly, the *Competencies* are not specified for each grade. The writers believed that to do so was inappropriate and counterproductive to guiding teaching and learning activities. They state:

> With the *English/Language Arts Guide (1992)* as a foundation, writing teams began to identify English/language arts competencies for the specified grade levels. Immediately, it became apparent that the courses English 9, 10, 11, and 12 could not be viewed in isolation. **Unlike other disciplines where content and processes might differ from course to course or from year to year, the English/language arts curriculum (Grades 9-12) is designed as a single, integrated sequence.** [*Competencies*, p. 6]

Assessments Student Incentives Academic Intervention

All comments are correct as stated

Benchmarking

1. The science curriculum guide used international standards in the development process. A recently passed bill requires the curriculum developers to review proficiency statements and standards from other states and countries.

2. Regarding President Clinton's proposed voluntary national assessments, the Indiana response should be "Probably Yes."

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to respond to your report.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Fallon

Robert A. Fallon, Director
Office of Program Development

cc: Dr. Suellen Reed, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Phyllis Land Usher, Assistant Superintendent
Mary Tiede Wilhelmus, Director, Communications Office
Ann Dougherty and Heidi Glidden, American Federation of Teachers

STATE OF IOWA

TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
TED STILWILL, DIRECTOR

June 23, 1997

Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Following are introductory paragraphs which explain the standards, assessment and benchmarking processes for the state of Iowa

Standards: Although Iowa does not have state standards, each accredited school or school district is required by Iowa law to have established clear learning goals for each grade level.

Assessment: Each district is also responsible for an assessment program that measures student achievement which is reported to the local community and the Iowa Department of Education.

Benchmarking: Because Iowa has a philosophy of local control, the Department of Education and intermediate education service agencies provide assistance and support to local districts in their standard-setting, benchmarking activities, assessment practices and professional development programs for teachers and administrators.

Sincerely,

Judy Jeffrey

Judy Jeffrey, Administrator
Division of Elementary and
Secondary Education

JJ/jlc

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FAX (515) 242-5988

Kentucky

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CAPITAL PLAZA TOWER 500 MERO STREET FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY 40601

Wilmer S. Cody, Commissioner

June 23, 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the AFT publication, *Making Standards Matter 1997*. As a state that is aggressively involved in school reform, we certainly understand the importance of standards in establishing expectations for student learning, in providing guidance for curriculum, and in providing the baseline for appropriate assessment and accountability systems.

Kentucky has worked continuously to establish a standards-based educational system that provides a rigorous instructional program for all students -- one that provides for depth of learning, as well as the appropriate breadth, required for success in today's world. That is not an easy task, but it is one which must be attacked consistently and constantly to assure the appropriateness of both the learning and assessment programs.

While we appreciate the AFT's recognition of areas of strengths in our standards documents, we continue to disagree with several of the ratings provided. We expressed our position at more length last year in our letter which was published in *Making Standards Matter 1996*. We believe that our standards, and established supporting documents, provide the appropriate degree of guidance for the development of both curriculum and assessment. The state's standards were developed, reviewed, and revised by Kentucky educators. The *Core Content for Assessment* documents were endorsed by virtually every professional organization in the state, and district upon district and school upon school have used the academic expectations and core content to develop local curriculum. We believe this attests to the appropriate balance provided between specificity and generality in both content and skills.

Kentucky is committed to high standards and the natural unfolding and development of support materials. Meaningful standards, and the communication of those standards, have been identified through a combination of documents including concisely stated learning goals and academic expectations, sample demonstrators or benchmarks of student learning, identified core content for assessment, model course outlines, teacher handbooks, released assessment items linked to performance standards, annotated student work, and assessment reports. I challenge AFT to more extensively review the vast array of materials available and to more accurately reflect the intricacies involved in establishing and supporting a strong instructional program.

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Additionally, please note that Kentucky was one of the first states to support and commit to the use of the new voluntary national assessments. As demonstration of Kentucky's deep belief in high standards and commitment to this test and other benchmarking opportunities, I serve as the chair for the National Test Panel.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to this report.

Sincerely,

Wilmer S. Cody

WSC/BE
gandal

Enclosures

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0023

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
GOVERNOR

June 24, 1997

J. DUKE ALBANESE
COMMISSIONER

Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Matt:

I trust that you are doing well and that you will take some time for respite in Boothbay Harbor, enjoying Maine's famous summer amenities and extraordinary natural resources.

Enclosed for your review is a compilation of information intended as an update regarding Maine's major public policy initiative around education reform. As you know, Maine has worked diligently to articulate standards and performance indicators across eight content areas. Several thousand Maine educators and citizens have contributed to this public discourse, culminating with our Legislature's passage of the *Learning Results* legislation just a couple of weeks ago. As Governor Angus S. King, Jr. signed the bill into law, he made it clear to the media that this legislation was clearly the highlight of this extraordinary legislative session.

What the 118th Legislature endorsed as public policy is, indeed, significant: the standards and the performance indicators, collectively a description of the "ends" of learning for Maine students, were adopted in their detail, as opposed to having the specifics simply endorsed through the rule-making process. Coupled with the last Legislature's enactment of the concept of *Learning Results*, complete with a comprehensive system of state and local assessment, Maine is well poised for the future. We have high standards that describe the "ends" of learning while carefully honoring the New England tradition of academic freedom for teachers and school systems as they make decisions regarding pedagogy and curricula design. Our foundation is built on (1) twelve years of sophisticated state assessments, an area that many states are just beginning to implement; and (2) Maine's strong performance (at the top of the nation) in reading, mathematics, and science on the NAEP measures.

Hopefully, the material enclosed will prove helpful, illuminating the fine work of Maine citizens and policy-makers.

Please feel free to call me or drop by when you visit Maine.

Sincerely,

J. Duke Albanese
Commissioner

JDA:cjw

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Making Standards Matter 1997

Maine's Response

The June 12 draft of the 1997 report contains several inaccuracies. They are corrected on the survey itself and are explained below.

Standards:

Question 2. Maine's standards were approved and enacted by the legislature in May 1997. They are now in final form and a copy is enclosed.

Question 3. There appear to be some inconsistencies in how Maine's standards were evaluated. We believe that AFT's criteria are consistent with the content and construction of our standards, and urge you to reconsider your judgment.

English: On page 4 of the draft manuscript of the report, the level of specific information required for English standards is described. We believe that our standards do provide this level of detail. (See the highlighted sections of the English Language Arts section of Maine's Learning Results in the enclosed copy.) Lists of required reading is not included in our standards because such lists almost completely define local curriculum. In a state where curriculum is locally controlled, each district's school board determines what literature and other texts will be required. The state has made a conscious choice not to include such a list in its standards for this reason.

Social Studies: The social studies standards are now delineated according to the traditional social studies disciplines, as required by the legislature in its 1996 special session. The standards and performance indicators are brimming with specific information required of students as they examine history and identify the meaning of important events.

Mathematics: On page 4 of the draft manuscript of the report, an example of an "unacceptable" math standard is described as "apply geometric rules and formulas in real world situations." Maine's equivalent standard is "students will understand and apply concepts from geometry." The next level of Maine's standards, called performance indicators, describes specific knowledge and skills related to this standard at the pre-K - 2, 3 - 4, 5 - 8, and secondary grade spans. This is the level which outlines the "common core" of knowledge. In the 5-8 grade span, content knowledge includes: "compare, classify, and draw two dimensional shapes and three dimensional figures" and "use a coordinate system to define and locate positions". By our analysis, 90 percent of the mathematics grade span indicators are at this level of specificity. It is difficult for us to imagine more detailed content. We believe that our math standards meet the AFT criteria.

Assessments:

Question 1. Maine's current assessment system, which is performance based and administered to all students in grades 4, 8 and 11, is completely consistent with the state's Learning Results. In May 1997 the legislature appropriated additional funds to test all students in writing, math, science and social studies (currently, matrix sampling is used in science and social studies).

Student Incentives:

High school exit exams have never been included in any of the proposed state legislation, although several policy-level committees have wrestled with the issue during the last three years. The most recent group to do so is the Commissioner's Assessment Design Group, which has recommended linking student achievement of the Learning Results to the local requirements for earning a high school diploma.

The underlying assumption of this category of the survey is that students are the only stakeholders accountable for achievement. In a standards-based system, everyone is accountable, including parents, school board members, legislators, and teachers. The challenge of developing a standards-based public education system is building a system of incentives which enables all stakeholders to be accountable.

Question 1. Student promotion decisions are made locally.

Question 2. A combination of state and local assessments will determine student achievement. The required level of student performance will likely be determined by the state Department of Education, using actual student work, in conjunction with practicing classroom teachers and technical experts.

Question 3. Maine is still debating how to describe the performance of each student at the end of his/her school career and what the relationship of such a description might be to the diploma. In other words, our discussion has been about how to provide students, future employers, parents and colleges with a clear record of accomplishment, and not how to sort students according to what they have achieved.

Academic Intervention:

Question 1. Districts which cannot or will not organize themselves so that all students have equal opportunity to achieve the Learning Results will receive "intensive support" from the Department of Education.

Benchmarking:

Question 1. Maine was one of three pilot sites for the national New Standards Project to develop and field test a standards-linking protocol which enabled us to benchmark our standards to national and international standards and curricula collected by the National Center for Education and the Economy. Consequently, Maine's standards have been benchmarked to international standards as part of the this pilot work.

Question 2. Many of the details of this national assessment are still unknown. Maine wants to be sure that the test is directly linked to our state standards. Our participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress has provided us with valuable information about how our students compare with others across the country.

Maryland

Maryland State Department of
EDUCATION

Schools for Success

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Phone (410) 767-0100
TTY/TDD (410) 333-6442

June 18, 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Maryland section of Making Standards Matter 1997. We particularly appreciate this chance, since there were some errors in the text. I have enclosed for your use suggested changes in the text to Maryland's section that should correct two errors. If you have further questions about the corrections, please contact Dr. Ronald Peiffer, Assistant State Superintendent for School and Community Outreach (410-767-0473).

Also enclosed is our response to the comments on Maryland. I believe that by examining the Maryland Learning Outcomes document in isolation, you are unable to see the full range of instructional connections that you found satisfactory in our High School Core Learning Goals. The response, I believe, gives us an opportunity to aid readers in understanding how Maryland's K-8 standards may fall outside your criteria for programs, but are so robust in nature that instructional improvements are occurring at a very strong rate. Analysis of the 1993-96 data on school and school system performance shows clearly that where a precise instructional focus is occurring, performance improvements are very strong.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to these documents.

Sincerely,

Nancy S. Grasmick

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

NSG:pm
Enclosures

Response to the Maryland Section of Making Standards Matter 1997

Maryland has made a deliberate effort to link instruction and testing K-12 in a way that gives teachers and students a clear idea of rigorous expectations. The high school functional competency testing program, established in Maryland in the 1980s represents high stakes in that the tests are tied to graduation. However, they represent low standards in that the state wanted only to establish minimal standards and expectations for the Maryland high school diploma. However, as the AFT report notes, new proposed high school standards are being designed to raise expectations and performance across the board in a very significant way.

The K-8 standards identified in the Maryland Learning Outcomes similarly set very rigorous expectations for students in elementary and middle school. While some other states may be testing at only the basic skills level, Maryland has moved K-8 as well to the application level, as reflected in the Maryland Learning Outcomes. Assuming that teachers are implementing the Maryland Instructional Frameworks, which form the basis for testing and instruction, students are expected to demonstrate basic skills mastery in the classroom and via state tests. The Maryland Learning Outcomes are grouped by reading, writing, language usage, mathematics, science, and social studies. They explicitly identify what students should be able to do by grades 3, 5, and 8.

The steady increase in performance observed in Maryland schools since the 1993 baseline year indicate that teachers and principals understand the outcomes and are making appropriate changes in their instruction. Though Maryland's K-8 standards may fall outside the AFT criteria for programs, they are so robust in nature that instructional improvements are occurring at a very strong rate. Analysis of the 1993-96 data on school and school system performance shows clearly that where a precise instructional focus is occurring, performance improvements are very strong. Maryland assesses student mastery of the outcomes by way of performance assessments and extended responses. The assessments require students to have mastery of the basics and to be able to apply what they know to real world problem-solving situations.

Massachusetts

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Department of Education

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Robert V. Antonucci
Commissioner

June 19, 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for this opportunity to again present our views on the AFT's critique of the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, in science/technology, mathematics, English Language Arts, and history/social science. We continue to appreciate the role that AFT is playing in judging state standards. The comments you make are constructive because they appear to be objective and based on national norms uniformly applied to the various state efforts.

Following are our comments on your draft review:

(1) Science/Technology Framework

Thank you for your rating of "exemplary" for this framework. We agree.

(2) English Language Arts Framework

We appreciate your comments that the new framework, approved by the State Board of Education in January 1997, "is a major improvement over the version we reviewed last year." The Board of Education and Commissioner put together a process in which we included several members of the Board on a committee with teachers to draft a new document, then released this draft document for extensive public comment, which we received from teachers and others. This proved to be a very successful model.

(3) Mathematics Framework

We do not consider the mathematics framework to be "borderline." Your concerns are that it will "need to be improved to be of maximum use to teachers and others in the future." In May 1995, the Council of Chief State School Officers commented on the frameworks in mathematics and science then prepared by 40 states. In the CCSSO report, "State Curriculum Frameworks in Mathematics and Science," on the issue of usefulness to teachers in demonstrating the application of standards to local curriculum and instruction, the CCSSO commended the Massachusetts mathematics framework and illustrated it as an example "clearly showing differences between typical classroom practice today and intended practice under the vision of the framework." Massachusetts' mathematics framework was one of two across the country used as an exemplar in this regard. Also,

consistency across sections," which CCSSO saw as "a key ingredient of frameworks" in which vignettes and examples "can provide a real-life grounding to the vision, strands, content and strategies that have been laid out." Massachusetts' mathematics framework was one of three across the country used as an exemplar in this regard.

(4) History/Social Science Framework

On June 16, 1997, the Board of Education approved the final framework for Massachusetts, in history/social science. The AFT has not yet seen this version, because it was drafted in the past several weeks. A committee of three Board members and teachers, working to revise an April draft produced by three other Board members, developed this document. It is strong in content. We welcome your review of this document once final edits on it have been made and the Board gives it final approval, expected by mid-August. Therefore, the comments you have made which pertain to the April draft need to be revised to reflect the new, approved document.

Other Comments

The AFT criticisms will be considered as we move forward with our frameworks. The Board and I have agreed that I will be recommending a mechanism and timetable for revising and strengthening all of the frameworks, which include these four and the arts, world languages and comprehensive health. These are works in progress. Professional development around the frameworks is our key focus now. Our state assessment, customized to tie to the learning standards in the frameworks, will begin in the spring of 1998.

Also, on page 3 of your draft comments ("Student Incentives"), your language on "exit exams" needs to be revised. The tenth grade competency determination is not an exit exam, since in our view an exit exam would be given in 12th grade and there is no such test now scheduled to be administered. Students will be required to pass the 10th grade competency determination to receive a high school diploma. As it is now scheduled, the tenth graders in the year 2000/01 will take this test for the "high stakes" envisioned in our Education Reform Act.

Finally, on the matter of the proposed voluntary national assessments in 4th grade reading and 8th grade mathematics, Massachusetts agreed two weeks ago to joining this program because it matches our own scheduled state assessments. However, we have a new 3rd grade reading test in Massachusetts. We do not believe the state should wait until 4th grade to provide a standardized reading test. We have encouraged a shift in the national plan from 4th grade reading to 3rd grade reading.

Again, thank you for the contribution you are making to the national efforts to improve teaching and learning by raising standards for public education.

Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci
Commissioner of Education

Michigan

STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909

June 23, 1997

ARTHUR E. ELLIS
Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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Mr. Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft of the AFT's 1997 report on state standards. Michigan's content standards and benchmarks have been in use in draft and final form for over three years. The educators and citizens of our state do not consider them to be "borderline" documents. Our feedback is that the standards are very useful to both teachers and parents in developing a common core curriculum. The comments do not reflect the specificity that Michigan educators and the broader community see in the content standards.

We are pleased to note the positive comments about the science content standards and benchmarks. However, we are concerned about the comments on Michigan's content standards in English language arts, mathematics, and social studies in the 1997 draft report. The report asserts that "these standards would be stronger if they provided more elaboration in terms of the underlying content that all students should learn". The content elaboration is there in all three content areas. This elaboration is precisely the purpose of the benchmarks that accompany the content standards.

We agree with your criterion that "standards must be firmly rooted in the content of the subject area. For example the English language arts standard on genre and craft of language includes benchmarks referencing poetry, science fiction, story telling, drama, mystery and fantasy. Specific examples from mathematics and social studies are also contained in Michigan's content standards and benchmarks. The examples of "specificity" in each content area are debatable, particularly as to what belongs in a content standard. For example the enclosed mathematics sample teaching and learning activities and the performance standards and vignettes in each subject area provide very specific definition of the content.

Content standards cannot be "moving targets". To be useful to schools in developing local curriculum the standards must be consistent over a long enough period to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the standards. During the 1994-95 school year, the draft standards were subject to formal public reviews and to reviews by many Michigan educators and

scholars from throughout the nation. Based on this feedback, the standards and their accompanying benchmarks were revised to enhance clarity and specificity. The standards need to be in place long enough to provide a consistent policy environment for local curriculum development. We will be revising the content standards once our state level assessments are aligned with the standards and data on student performance from the state assessment becomes available.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the draft report. We look forward to working with you to resolve these issues. Please feel free to contact me at (517) 335-5784, if you need additional information or clarification.

Sincerely,

Paul Bielawski
Supervisor
Curriculum Development Program

Enclosures

Minnesota Children

Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning

Response to the American Federation of Teachers' Discussion of Minnesota's Standards-Based Initiative for Making Standards Matter, 1997

We welcome and appreciate the opportunity to respond to the American Federation of Teachers' discussion of Minnesota's new graduation standards initiative. Our response will indicate differences of perspective in two areas: (1) differences in basic assumptions about the criteria by which the Federation evaluates standards, and (2) differences of conclusions of fact.

Basic Assumptions:

The analysis of Minnesota's Profile of Learning standards argues that, In our view, this attempt at integrating the disciplines makes the standards harder to read and the subject matter harder to decipher. Quite the contrary, Minnesota' s Profile of Learning is divided into ten areas of complex skills and processes in order to clarify what is actually being learned and taught. Rather than integrating all areas traditionally taught in social studies classes under the discipline "social studies" categorization, Minnesota clarifies the need for students to learn about people and cultures, historiography, resource management, etc., and further subdivides into such specific standards as issue analysis and US citizenship. Because Minnesota is committed to integrated and interdisciplinary approaches to critical learning, we believe that the traditional subject-area based organization of standards is both counterintuitive to definition of what students are really to learn and promotive of where rather than how learning is defined. Minnesota has annually found its standards to be criticized by the Federation because we persist in defining learning by what students need to know rather than by the traditional structure and departmentalization of high schools.

Further criticism is advanced by the Federation because Minnesota' s standards do not deconstruct learning goals into lesson or unit-based component parts (e.g., writing into grammar, mechanics, etc.). An examination of the model assessment packages identifies that such attributes of writing and all other areas are expected and necessary in the performance of students' written composition standards. Our disagreement is perhaps more about level of abstraction than about expectations. To place in standards all the "factoids" and contributory skills necessary to performing a complex process/skill is to suggest that the complex act of written composition, for example, is simply a sum of its parts. Our

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more constructivist approach would suggest, through the performance package checklists of evaluation criteria, that writing includes these attributes, but is a constructivist activity which is more than simply sub-skill demonstration.

Additionally, the Federation suggests that the requirements for basic skills in Minnesota are not useful to teachers and parents. Clarification through samples has been done for these audiences and there is little confusion about what skills students need to be able to demonstrate. The test specifications are, indeed, for test developers, and their content does reflect the requirements, but these specifications have also been formatted for audiences more interested in what is being expected than in how the test items will reflect those expectations.

Finally, there is the annual Federation conclusion that these standards do not advance a common core curriculum. Minnesota has, in fact, statutory prohibition against mandated statewide curriculum. It is the position of the state that, after setting statewide learning standards, the state should not dictate curricular or instructional decisions and that these decisions are best left to local districts and sites who can better determine the programs, methods, strategies, and materials through which individual students will best achieve standards.

Conclusions of Fact:

It is important that we clarify that schools will continue to have options of tests on which students may demonstrate achievement of the basic skills. The new law requires only that ALL students take the SAME test at the eighth grade level. Other tests may be used as retests for students who fail the state test if the district chooses to use one or more of them.

Equally important is the stipulation in law that the secondary test now being designed must be highly correlated to the Profile of Learning. The ten learning areas and the core skills and processes articulated therein will be, by law, the focus of the statewide high school test. Thus, the legislatively mandated tests will, when operationalized, provide consistent assessment of student achievement across varying assessment packages, programs, and instructional methods which are locally determined.

Finally, it must be noted that international sources were among the resources used in the development of Minnesota's graduation standards. We were, as a state, strongly involved in the TIMMS assessments, for example, and used those materials heavily in our math and science standards.

Missouri

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
ROBERT E. BARTMAN, Commissioner of Education P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0480

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION
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June 24, 1997

Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to review in advance your third annual report on the progress and prospects of standards-based reform and your analysis of Missouri's draft curriculum frameworks. While we would not generally dispute your evaluation based on AFT's criteria, we do question the fairness of applying your criteria across states when in many cases you are not comparing similar products.

In Missouri, the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 limited the number of performance standards that could be developed to a maximum of 75 so they could not be grade level specific and as subject level specific as your criteria demands. The Outstanding Schools Act also provided that the Curriculum Frameworks could only be a guide for school districts to use and not a mandated curriculum. The Show-Me Standards and Curriculum Frameworks were designed by Missouri classroom teachers. They have been well accepted and teachers feel that they are a very "user-friendly" document that will help local school districts establish high expectations for students and provide guidelines for development of their own local curriculum. We think it is unfair to criticize the product without an explanation of the limitations imposed on the process.

We would appreciate your consideration of publishing the above two paragraphs in your report.

The information that is checked in the boxes is accurate at the present time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Orlo Shroyer, Ed.D.
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Instruction

C: Commissioner Bartman

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Page 1 of 1

American Federation of Teachers Survey

Standards:

For the past year and a half the state has been involved in a standards development process through direction of the State Board of Education the Goals 2000 program. Following is a brief history of that process:

In December of 1994 the State Board of Education charged that a State Panel be named through the Educate America Act to oversee the development of academic content standards. The State Panel held their first meeting in September of 1995 and focused on reading/writing standards. A writing committee was formed in October 1995 to begin drafting content standards. The twenty-two member committee comprised of educators and citizens presented their first draft to the State Panel at their December 15, 1995, meeting. The committee convened again in February 1996 to incorporate the Panel's suggestions for a second draft.

Prior to the establishment of the State Panel Nebraska had developed extensive frameworks documents in several content areas. The *Mathematics & Science Frameworks for Nebraska Schools* was adopted by the Nebraska State Board of Education in March 1994. The *Social Studies Frameworks for Nebraska Schools* and the *Visual and Performing Arts Frameworks for Nebraska Schools* were completed in Fall 1995. The foreign language framework was in draft form. These frameworks documents served as the basis for writing content standards in each of the disciplines. Groups of writers from each framework reconvened to develop the first drafts of content standards.

All of the above mentioned content areas were reviewed at the February 8, 1996, State Panel meeting. Suggestions for improvement were returned to the frameworks writing teams. Revisions were made and all content areas prepared draft standards to be reviewed in a public engagement process.

On April 18, 1996, a satellite downlink was held at 19 different locations throughout Nebraska to gain citizen input on the draft content standards. At their May 20, 1996, State Panel meeting members reviewed the input from the downlink and prepared a set of academic content standards to send forth to the State Board of Education. Draft standards were presented in Reading/Writing, Math, Social Studies, Science, Visual and Performing Arts, and Foreign Language.

The State Board of Education discussed the standards at two retreats during the summer of 1996, and on September 13, 1996 passed for discussion a draft *Policy Statement and Standards* document, focusing on the academic content standards in the areas of Reading/Writing, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

In February of 1997 the State Board determined it wanted to gather still more public input on the standards and approved additional activities for public engagement. The Board contracted with the Public Agenda Foundation of New York to conduct a series of focus groups in April of 1997

leading to a series of town hall meetings in June and July involving hundreds of citizens across Nebraska participating in detailed conversations about the standards and their implementation. At the same time the Board itself is hosting a set of open listening sessions for anyone wishing to comment on the standards and their implementation. The first on was held on May 8, 1997. Individual Board members are also conducting individual listening sessions. It is expected that a decision regarding standards and their implementation will be in September of 1997.

At the present time content standards are locally driven. Most of Nebraska's school districts are involved in some type of school improvement process and many of them have established content standards as a result of that process.

Assessments:

Nebraska currently has no state assessment system. Local districts determine what assessments will be used. The Public Engagement process on the standards is also gathering information on how the general public feels about assessment and accountability.

Performance Standards:

At this time there has been no work completed on performance standards. The public engagement process is intended to give the state Board a sense of how the general public feels about performance assessment and the State's role in their development and implementation.

MARY L. PETERSON
Superintendent of Public Instruction

KEITH W. RHEAULT
Deputy Superintendent
Instructional, Research and Evaluative Services

DOUGLAS C. THUNDER
Deputy Superintendent
Administrative and Fiscal Services

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July 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal
AFT Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Nevada is in a period of incredible growth and rapid transition from the industrial age to the information age. Our world, as it unfolds in the next century, will demand unprecedented academic performance of our young people, based on standards unlike anything before seen here in Nevada.

Let there be no doubt that standards-based educational reform is sweeping across the great state of Nevada. The document you are now holding is evidence that Nevada takes seriously the need for stronger academic standards to address these higher expectations. We are excited to be part of the Making Standards Matter 1997: An Annual Fifty-State Report on Efforts to Raise Academic Standards. *I am especially proud that a review of this report illustrates the monumental strides that the State of Nevada has made over the past year in developing and implementing high academic standards for Nevada children.* We intend to assess these standards accurately, and assure that schools have adequate materials to help students achieve these standards.

Such massive and vigorous changes to our system of public instruction will only succeed with the support of all of our communities. Please join us as we begin.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Peterson

Mary L. Peterson
Superintendent of Public Instruction

MLP/kc/tm

An Equal Opportunity Agency

New Jersey

State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CN 500
TRENTON NJ 08625-0500

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN
Governor

LEO KLAGHOLZ
Commissioner

June 24, 1997

Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington, DC 2001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Commissioner of Education Leo Klagholz has asked me to respond to the observations and analyses of New Jersey's standards and assessment initiative as reviewed by the American Federation of Teachers. I am pleased that you have taken the interest to review the progress of all of the states in this important area and thank you for the opportunity to comment. I would like to offer the following information to incorporate into your third annual report:

- New Jersey developed **standards** as the first step of a complete process incorporating our statewide assessment program with the intent of having local districts align their curricula with the established standards. The standards have been developed in seven content areas. In addition, five cross-content workplace readiness standards were developed. These will be addressed through all of the content areas. These standards are not meant to serve as a statewide curriculum guide. They define the results expected but do not limit district strategies for how to ensure that their students achieve these expectations. We want local districts to incorporate into their curricula what all students should learn in their thirteen years of educational experience. We want districts to be innovative and to focus on more than minimum requirements.

- **Frameworks** for each of the seven content areas are now in the process of being developed. The frameworks: illuminate the content standards and indicators through high quality activities that assist districts align curriculum; illustrate how each of the standards can be addressed at all grade levels; provide a guide to teachers, administrators, and districts; help translate a vision of exemplary education into reality; and provide guidance on the major issues, on the process of systemic change, and on the areas of content, instruction, and assessment. By the fall of 1998 all of the frameworks will be completed and disseminated.

- As of this date, your observation that **assessment** is not linked to the standards is incorrect.

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In May and June of this year, we field tested a new grade four examination which assessed students in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, critical thinking, and speaking. Our assessment program will expand to incorporate all seven core areas and five workplace-readiness areas over the next nine years at benchmark grades of 4, 8, and 11/12. The year after a new subject area is field tested at grade 4, it will be, likewise, field tested at grades 8 and 11/12. We have published a schedule noting when our seven content area standards and five cross-content readiness skills will be incorporated into our statewide assessment program. This is an extremely ambitious testing program that will be phased-in over a nine year period. A copy of the schedule is attached for your review. The eighth grade Early Warning Test (EWT) and eleventh grade High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) are in the process of being revised in accordance with the standards and the enclosed schedule. I should add that the HSPT is a requirement for graduation.

- New Jersey's assessment program currently utilizes nationally recognized professionals, and we await the development of any **national tests** for review and comparison to our own tests before making final decisions regarding whether and how to utilize them. We will evaluate every proposal for testing based on how it impacts upon the implementation of the content standards. In general, we support the use of national testing to bring uniformity and accountability to the standards movement.

Additionally, in the checklist which you have included with the materials sent to New Jersey, I have made some changes noted by an asterisk on pages three and four. I have also written in some additional content that I would ask that you incorporate.

You have asked us to provide information regarding whether we view your judgments to be fair. I would like to address that particular point at this time. In so doing, I shall utilize some of the qualities which you have identified as meeting a "common core" criteria. In my experience, I believe that different states use different terminology when speaking about standards-based reform. Whereas one state may speak about standards as providing great detail and significant substance and content, other states use standards to imply general indicators or expectations. In the case of New Jersey, our standards in **seven** academic and **five** workplace readiness areas are designed to communicate a general level of expectation of what we expect all students to be able to know and do at grades 4, 8, and 11 in those twelve areas. It is through the **curriculum frameworks** that we will provide much greater detail by bringing classroom experiences, vignettes, and other practical suggestions to classroom educators as they set about preparing their students to meet these standards. In other words, I believe that our standards **plus** our frameworks would meet the AFT common core criteria.

While it is accurate to say that the statewide assessment program for grades 8 and 11 are not now linked to the standards, this is accurate only for the time being. As the chart which has been enclosed with other materials indicates, we are engaged in a **very** ambitious expansion of our statewide assessment program so that by the year 2001 all seven academic areas and five workplace readiness areas will have been incorporated into the grade 8 and grade 11 assessment programs, as

well as the new grade 4 assessment. We in New Jersey are moving away from a system in which we dictate to schools how they must organize their curricula. Instead, having adopted Core Curriculum Content Standards on May 1, 1996, with an aligned assessment system which will play out over the next nine years, we intend to give much discretion to local districts regarding what courses they will require students to complete in fulfillment of the standards. Therefore, we do not believe it a fair criteria that standards must define the core courses that all students are expected to take. We believe that this is, by rights, a local decision.

I thank you for this opportunity to provide input. New Jersey is always happy to work with the AFT. Should you wish to discuss any of the issues raised here, please do not hesitate to contact me at (609)292-1083.

Sincerely,

Ellen Schechter
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Academic Programs
and Standards

ES:JD/jh
enclosure
c: Leo Klagholz
Jay Doolan
Gerald DeMauro

New York

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, N.Y. 12234

June 23, 1997

Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the report *Making Standards Matter 1997*. There are two areas where I would like to clarify the information presented. First, in the section on student incentives, the narrative correctly states that New York State is phasing in a system that will require all students to pass Regents examinations in the four core areas in order to graduate high school. Therefore, the question in that section that addresses whether the state will have a system of differentiated diplomas linked to the standards and assessments should be answered "yes." All diplomas will be linked to the standards and assessments; the differentiations that will be used to indicate levels of achievement in relation to the standards are still under discussion. The other question that is answered incorrectly is the question on required academic intervention for students not meeting the standards. When the new assessments are in place, New York will require academic intervention for students not meeting the standards as indicated by performance on state assessments.

We appreciate your review of the drafts of the *Resource Guides*. As you indicate, the draft guides contain a mixture of types of guidance for curriculum development. We agree with two of the criticisms that you make: the guides are, at this point, hard to navigate, and they do not make sufficient connections with the standards. We will revise the draft guides based on feedback from teachers and other reviewers and publish them during the next school year. We hope to make them leaner, more consistent, and, most importantly, clearer about the connection with the *Learning Standards* and with the state assessments. The social studies guide will contain scope and sequence guides to provide the specificity that you and other reviewers have found lacking.

All of our work on standards, assessments, and resource guides has confirmed our belief that the real strength of the work comes from professional conversations about examples of student work that demonstrate acceptable performance in relation to the standards. It is teachers' reflections on and conversations about what work is good enough that are really "making standards matter" in New York State.

Sincerely,

Roseanne DeFabio
Coordinator, Curriculum & Assessment

North Carolina

Public Schools of North Carolina

State Board of Education
Jay Robinson, Chairman

Department of Public Instruction
Michael E. Ward, State Superintendent

June 25, 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

We commend the AFT for your efforts to study the issues of the states' curricula and are pleased to see that you have examined additional support material which has resulted in an improved rating for North Carolina. It is recognized that your review process has a distinctly different focus on core content and specificity than our state curriculum.

We wish your process more adequately reflected the depth of support documents and the curriculum development and implementation process that is used in North Carolina. It is our experience that a state level document has little effect at the classroom level without a comprehensive, long range process of implementation. We think your evaluation process would also be better if it considered the inherent differences in various curriculum areas. In the case of mathematics, there is a distinct sequence of skills and concepts that can be specified by grade level. Others, such as science, are more conceptual and have no widely agreed upon content sequence. We consider that the scientific process is by far more important than the content of science, especially at the elementary and middle school levels.

We differ with your position that a highly specific curriculum will solve the problems of the transient student. We do not think it is possible, or even desirable, for a state to produce a "teacher proof" curriculum that would produce uniform instruction no matter where a student moves. Because of differing weather conditions from the mountains to the seashore there is a wide variation in the North Carolina school calendar year. This can vary by as much as six weeks. In addition, we have numerous schools now operating on a year-round calendar and over half of the state's high schools operating under a 4 by 4 block schedule. More specificity in the curriculum would not mitigate differences in the school calendar or schedule. Nor have these diverse factors had a negative effect on achievement.

An understanding of the historical perspective of a states' curriculum is also important. Each state is unique in respect to its curriculum, although most states have very similar curriculum goals by grade levels and courses which are based on national standards developed by various professional organizations. In 1985 North Carolina had a very specific curriculum document of over 7000 pages. Legislators, teachers and school administrators objected to the specificity and rigidity it described. The message was clear that subskills were more important than applications of knowledge and problem solving skills. It reflected the recent conclusions of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study which describes curriculum in the US as being a "mile wide and an inch deep".

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Since 1985 the curriculum has changed to a framework format which reflects and supports national professional standards. Support documents such as teacher handbooks, benchmarks, matrices, content strategies documents, curriculum guides, testlet packets, parent and teacher brochures, video tapes and CD ROM disks are available to support the local development of effective classroom instructional programs. Our 17 curriculum areas are revised on a staggered five-year cycle. This staggered revision is an economic decision so as to provide new textbooks and instructional materials for the revised curricula. The multiple adoption process provides commercially produced materials that support and expand the various frameworks content.

North Carolina has a very strong, high stakes accountability program, which assesses basic skills in grades 3-8 and high school subject areas. This assessment program is correlated directly to the state curriculum objectives. Recently, the Nations Report Card published by Education Week ranks North Carolina as one of 12 states making the highest marks on the first National Report Card. We received an A for our standards and assessment and were one of three states receiving a perfect 100 point score in this area.

We consider the most important element in North Carolina's success the implementation process. This process relies on a comprehensive long range plan. North Carolina is blessed with an education infrastructure that shares responsibilities to improve instruction based on our frameworks. High trust is placed in the professional ability and integrity of our teachers and school administrators as they develop effective instructional programs through professional development activities. Over the past 10 years North Carolina has continued to make progress as evidenced by the following:

- In grades 3-8 our reading and mathematics scores have continued to improve.
- Our 1996 NAEP 8th grade average science score was one point below the national average and six point above the southeastern states. We think the science results come from emphasis on content through process emphasis which was criticized in your report.
- The 1996 NAEP average score for 4th grade mathematics was above the national level. North Carolina tied with Texas for the largest increase in student performance.
- Our 8th graders made the largest improvement in the nation since the 1990 NAEP. Secretary Riley declared North Carolina as one of three states making the most progress.

These and other accomplishments reflect comprehensive curriculum documents with high standards and expectations for all students. Most importantly, these accomplishments are the results of years of hard work by the educational community working together to improve learning for all students.

Please contact us if you have questions or we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Michael Ward

Michael E. Ward
State Superintendent

MW/WS/mcw

North Dakota

Department of Public Instruction
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Bismarck, ND 58505-0440
(701) 328-2260 Fax - (701) 328-2461

Dr. Wayne G. Sanstead
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

June 19, 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

I am forwarding to you a response to your invitation regarding the 3rd Annual American Federation of Teachers annual report.

PAGE ONE

While the English framework is stronger than the social studies and science frameworks, none of them provide enough detail in terms of the content students should learn to meet our "common core" criterion.

Our conception of a content framework is that it serves as a bridge between content standards and the classroom by providing for the content of the curriculum and how that content should be organized and presented. We find your comment that the English Language Arts Framework as not providing enough detail to be both incomprehensible and misguided. The purpose of a framework is to deliberately **not** provide for such things as a literary canon nor for specific curriculum content. The Frameworks, as we use them, provide for the big ideas (standards); it is up to the local school districts to determine the "core curriculum," as you put it.

As per items 1, 2, and 3 in the box on page 1, our 1992 and 1993 curriculum frameworks documents do not reflect our current understanding of what frameworks should be. That is, we do not view the frameworks in the content areas in Volumes 1 and 2 as operative. The math standards are now in early draft revision form, making the Math Frameworks and English Language Arts Frameworks usable documents for our local school districts. Again, as per your assessment of our documents as not being "clear and specific," in the context of your review, we find your evaluation irrelevant.

ASSESSMENTS

The State is now negotiating for a new norm-referenced test at grades yet to be determined. The norm-referenced tests under consideration are not linked to any of the current English Language Arts and Math Frameworks documents.

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Div of Independent Study
Fargo, ND
(701) 231-6000

Under a Office of Educational Research and Information-funded research project the State is developing, field-testing, and evaluating English language arts assessments against our English Language Arts Frameworks.

PAGE TWO

Box 1 - Item 1 and 2. State assessment instruments will be linked to State standards as the State frameworks are developed and State funding is provided to operationalize a system. **Student Incentives**: There are no mandates nor incentives for school districts to participate in alternative assessments at this time.

Box 2 - Item 1, 2, 3. The answers to items 1, 2, and 3 remain No.

PAGE THREE

No academic intervention is planned.

Benchmarking. The ELA document has seven standards and are benchmarked at grades 4, 8, and 12 for a total of 82 benchmarks.

Box 2 - Item 1. Remains No. **Item 2**. Probably Yes.

If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact me (701) 328-2098.

Your truly,

Clarence A. Bina

Clarence A. Bina, PhD
Director of ELA Project

ENC
cc: Wayne G. Sanstead
Gaylynn Becker
Ann Clapper

H:\JMARCELL\WP\GANDAL.REP

State of Ohio
Department of Education
Ohio Departments Building, Room 810, 65 South Front Street, Columbus 43215-4183

John M. Goff
Superintendent of Public Instruction

June 25, 1997

Matthew Gandal, Senior Associate
AFT Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

The American Federation of Teachers is to be congratulated for undertaking and sustaining this most ambitious initiative. The substantive nature of your design is commendable. Without exception, we applaud the criteria selected to complete this report and more importantly, the elaboration of those criteria. We believe them to be right on target. Additionally, we appreciate the opportunity to provide a written response to your formative conclusions about Ohio. The information that follows is provided in the hope that it may offer some clarification for the Ohio analysis.

We are naturally very pleased with your positive judgment of our mathematics and language arts standards, as articulated in Model Competency-Based Education Programs. We are very proud of these and are frequently asked by other states and nations for copies. We are also proud of our science and social studies standards, and while we acknowledge your judgment of them to be fair with respect to the criteria you use, we feel that some level of response is important to clarify what we are about. The fact is, we do not believe that it is possible to "over emphasize scientific skills and ways to apply science knowledge."

Under no circumstances do we disagree with the need for standards that are "clear, detailed, and firmly rooted in content." Further, we believe that in some cases (mathematics and language arts) it is important that the content be specified at the state level. We do not, however, believe this to be the case with either science or social studies, preferring that Ohio school districts use the models as intended and identify the content in which the standards are to be firmly rooted. We do not make the distinction between mathematics and language arts on the one hand and science and social studies on the other arbitrarily.

As young people have increasingly fewer first hand encounters with the physical world, we believe that a condition essential to quality rigorous learning, is lost. We believe that schools, even though they share virtually no responsibility for this condition, have a responsibility to do something about it. The knowledge and experiences students once brought with them to school--the result of frequent contacts with the physical world--have been replaced with an equally wide array of knowledge and experience, but all too often, one far removed from that which enables them to make sense of the world. To be sure, schools must continue to teach the symbol systems—reading, writing,

mathematics, history, geography, etc., but they must also attend to the hands-on world that raises as many questions in the minds of students about the phenomena with which they are working as it provides "right" answers to questions posed by others. We ought to avoid an imbalance in either direction.

A note about #3 under Student Incentives. At present, Ohio does not require students to pass exams based on challenging 10th, 11th, or 12th grade standards for graduation. We are, however, in the process of revising our learner standards (currently Minimum Standards for Elementary and Secondary Schools), to include new graduation requirements based upon state-identified competencies that reflect a student's entire school experience and require demonstrated proficiency through both state and local assessments.

Item #1 under Benchmarking states that Ohio did not use standards, curricula, and/or assessments from other countries as a resource while developing the state standards. We did, in fact pay close attention, not only to the specific content standards of other nations, but studied closely their pedagogical designs as well during the development of our model competency-based education programs. One consequence of this effort has been our strong support of integration within the various discipline areas. We are also continuously engaged in the examination of assessment practices and instruments developed in other nations.

We appreciate the opportunity to help clarify some of our efforts in Ohio with respect to your important work. We are delighted to have had and opportunity to inform your understanding of our work and to be part of the process you have established to allow that to occur.

Cordially,

Frank Schiraldi
Associate Director

Oklahoma

SANDY GARRETT
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

June 20, 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Oklahoma's core curriculum standards, *Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS)*, were adopted in 1993 after initial skills were developed and refined by committees of teachers, parents, vocational and higher education personnel pursuant to school reform legislation. The reform legislation also calls for a review of the core curriculum standards every three years to "implement any revisions in such curriculum deemed necessary to achieve further improvements in the quality of education for the students of this state."

Some content committees designed curriculum standards to span grade levels. For example, some districts have chosen to offer an American Studies class; this class may be taken by any high school student and incorporates core competencies from United States history, economics, government and geography. Oklahoma history skills may be taught in middle school, in high school or may be integrated into another social studies offering.

Oklahoma's science curriculum is grounded in developing scientific inquiry skills. The objectives provide flexibility to districts to construct an inquiry-based content framework that addresses local needs and student interests. Districts are strongly encouraged to add to the core curriculum standards at the local level, but in the end, local districts choose how, when and where to teach the mandated curriculum.

While *PASS* may not meet the American Federation of Teachers's criteria for a common core curriculum, we are proud of the rigorous standards detailed in the core curriculum document as they provide a foundation for locally developed curricula. I understand that your criteria was developed in order to evaluate each state's curriculum in light of what is optimal, but AFT is saying in its report that Oklahoma does not have state standards in science and social studies. With this conclusion, I must respectfully disagree.

Sincerely,

Sandy Garrett
State Superintendent

SG/mm

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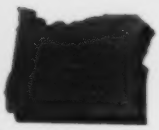

NORMA PAULUS
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Public Service Building, 255 Capitol Street NE, Salem, Oregon 97310-0203
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June 26, 1997

Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for allowing us to comment on your report. The American Federation of Teachers' review is welcome because it furthers our efforts to submit Oregon's standards and performance measures to continuous review and improvement.

A few words about the Oregon standards may be helpful. Since the beginning of our school improvement effort, the state's intent has been to create a standards-based system that would encourage all students to master a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum.

Our aim has been to develop challenging standards and performance measures that span the curriculum, that are fully aligned, and that include not only the years from kindergarten to the twelfth grade but that are congruent with the college admissions standards at our most demanding state institutions. The Oregon CIM/CAM/PASS system encompasses both a tenth and twelfth grade certificate (Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery) and a Performance Based Admissions System (PASS). Our goal was to create standards that could be taught within the school day and year and that could be measured using a statewide assessment system.

Developing such a system takes time. Oregon began creating its system in the eighties; the first statewide assessment in reading, writing and mathematics took place in 1991. The first statewide science assessment, which will join the assessments in English and mathematics, will be given in Spring 1998, social science (history, civics, geography and economics) will added in Spring 1999, with foreign languages and the Arts following in subsequent years.

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As the standards-based system has evolved, we have realized that every change affects some other part of the system. Performance assessment informs the standards and the standards in turn affect professional development. For that reason, many of our documents have been conspicuously marked "draft" although they have been widely distributed throughout Oregon and elsewhere for comment and review. Staff hesitate to formalize documents until the state has had enough experience implementing each newly developed part of the system. At this point, we have had sufficient experience with standards and performance assessments to publish documents that can fairly represent the richness and complexity of the Oregon's standards-based system. They will be available this summer.

As you note in your comments, Oregon has not completed its work with the social science curriculum. We will look forward to your review when those documents are completed.

Sincerely,

Norma Paulus
by Joyce Holmes Bletsen

Norma Paulus

cm/federal/aft ltr

Pennsylvania

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
333 MARKET STREET
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17126-0333

June 18, 1997

DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR ELEMENTARY
AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Mr. Matthew Gandal
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue NW Level A
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you so much for providing Pennsylvania with the opportunity to review the 1996 Pennsylvania Student Learning Outcome report.

The State of Pennsylvania has completed the development of our new proposed academic standards for Math, Reading, Writing and Science. These are in final form. We are doing standards in ten content areas.

Our proposed academic standards cover the core academic subjects and provide grade level benchmarks in grades 3, 5, 8 and 11. The standards clearly state what a student should learn and be able to do. These have clarity, rigor, measurability and accountability, to be considered for a common core curriculum. These are useful so teachers or others in schools can align curriculum to provide instruction so that learning can be achieved at proficient levels. We are leaving the materials used in teaching these up to the local school professionals.

We have developed a standard format so that all standards are written in a similar manner. Therefore, our Math, Reading and Writing format are available for review and one can see similarities in their designs rather than a different focus or format.

Pennsylvania's assessments have been aligned with our standards.

Task forces began with the first academic draft standards to identify what the standards required and to establish test items to be asked to measure the achievement levels of these standards by our schools. Also this task force with the Department of Education personnel have hired a professional assessment corporation to complete this assessment alignment with our standards.

Students will be assessed in grades 5, 8 and 11 in Reading and Math and Writing will be assessed in grades 6 and 9. Therefore, our State has assessment systems linked to our standards.

There is $10 million dollars in the 1997-98 budget for incentives for schools to meet the standards. Although Pennsylvania is a State that respects local authority, it is our hope that incentives will be the motivator for local schools to establish policies about student promotion correlated with achieving State standards and assessments at a proficient level.

Please understand that these concerns need to be corrected in your new report. Pennsylvania has made many changes since your 1996 report.

Please make the necessary corrections and if you need further information call me at (717) 787-1489 or Fax me at (717) 783-6802.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to update our progress on standards and assessment.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Ann Nobers, Ph.D.

Mary Ann Nobers, Ph.D.

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

June 24, 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Senior Associate
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

I am writing in response to the American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) review of academic standards setting in the states. While much of the information you have reported is accurate, there is new information with respect to Rhode Island's assessment program that I hope you will consider for publication. In addition, I welcome the opportunity to share my thoughts with you on the AFT's assessment and criteria for review.

Since your review, additional state funds have been authorized to expand our assessment program. Therefore, in addition to performance assessments in writing (grade 4, 8, 10), mathematics (grades 4, 8, 10), and health (grades 4, 8), we will add a language arts assessment for grades 4 and 8 in spring 1998, and at grade 10 in spring 1999. These assessments will reflect the English language arts frameworks.

Your appraisal of Rhode Island's frameworks verifies our intent to provide guidance to schools and districts as they work to develop challenging curriculum. Rhode Island's frameworks in English language arts, mathematics, science, health, family and consumer sciences, and the arts are the products of statewide consensus processes, and reflect the views of hundreds of classroom teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. These documents have been reviewed by experts outside the state as a routine part of their development, and contain the level of detail that Rhode Islanders view as appropriate from the state level. They are not meant to be used as curricula for local districts, but rather as guides for districts to use in developing their curricula.

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As the AFT document notes, Rhode Island's Certificate of Initial Mastery standards developed by the Skills Commission are more specific than the state frameworks. The CIM standards were developed at the district level, by teachers, using the frameworks as a resource. Therefore, as intended, the documents are aligned. By way of illustration, enclosed is a chart showing the relationship between the NCTM, Rhode Island and CIM standards in mathematics. It is important to note that both the frameworks and the CIM standards will have greater specificity as they are brought to life in the classroom.

For your information, in addition to social studies standards being developed as part of the CIM, Rhode Island is producing a "Standards Based Guide to K-12 Social Studies in Rhode Island Schools." This is a collaboration of Rhode Island's Department of Education, Social Studies Association, Geography Education Alliance, and Council on Economic Education. A draft version will be released in the fall for state and national review and comment.

I would urge the AFT to reconsider its criteria for accountability systems. Rhode Island has crafted a strategy that views the school as the unit of accountability rather than the student, and therefore does not receive acknowledgment in your review. Our plan requires schools to have strategic plans aimed at closing gaps in student performance. Performance targets are set for schools and districts, and annual yearly progress is expected. For those schools that do not increase the number of students performing at the proficient level based on Rhode Island's performance assessments, progressive strategies for intervening at the school level are followed. Students must not be held responsible for failing schools and flawed adult systems.

Many thanks for sharing your evaluation with us, and for providing the opportunity to comment. Our work, which is aimed at strengthening Rhode Island schools by setting high standards for all students, developing assessments to reflect and measure these standards, and improving accountability, requires continuous review and refinement. Your analysis is helpful in this effort.

Sincerely,

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

South Carolina

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Barbara Stock Nielsen
State Superintendent of Education

June 20, 1997

Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director, Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Dr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the analysis of South Carolina in AFT's publication, *Making Standards Matter 1997*. As you directed, I have enclosed the original copy with suggested corrections. The corrections are based upon a thorough reading and study of the AFT Criteria for Judging State Reforms and the report on South Carolina. Suggested corrections to your report and a rationale for these changes follow.

Standards
Last year the *South Carolina English Language Arts Framework and Academic Achievement Standards* did not meet your criteria. I do not agree with your rating and offer the following information to you and your colleagues for review and reconsideration of South Carolina's current rating in the English language arts discipline.

- In South Carolina, the plan to establish statewide academic expectations for its students included the development of curriculum frameworks and academic achievement standards. Frameworks contain content standards which outline what every student should know and be able to do at different grade levels. Academic achievement standards describe the evidence a student must provide in order to show that they have learned the content standards in the framework. Academic achievement standards are much more specific than the content standards on which they are based.
  During this stage of standards-based reform in South Carolina, teachers are developing grade level guidelines based on the academic achievement standards. By July 1997, South Carolina will have in place grade level guidelines in mathematics, science, and English language arts. The guidelines describe grade specific indicators for what students should know and be able to do at grades other than the benchmark grades in the achievement standards. For example, what should 4th grade and 5th

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grade students know and be able to do if they are making reasonable progress toward meeting end of grade 6 standards. Indicators which fit between the benchmark grades of 3, 6, 8, and 12 are being developed for grades 4, 5, 7, 9, and/or 10 in mathematics, English language arts and science. See the enclosed standards which have been finalized for grades Pre-K through grade 3 in English language arts and mathematics.

I strongly suggest to you that the *South Carolina English language arts Framework, Academic Achievement Standards*, and *Grade level Guidelines* contain all the qualities that meet AFT's "common core" criterion. Please reconsider your rating.

- The narrative in the second paragraph of the standards section should state that the *South Carolina Social Studies Framework* and *Academic Achievement Standards* will be available in Spring 1998.

Assessments

- The narrative describes South Carolina as not including social studies in the new statewide assessment program. This is not true. There are plans authorized by the State Superintendent of Education to assess students in social studies. Once the State Board of Education adopts the *Social Studies Framework* and *Academic Achievement Standards* (Spring 98), test items will be field-tested in 1998/99 with full test administration in 1999. As stated in your criteria, the state will be given credit for planned assessments even if work has not yet begun.

Benchmarking

- The writing teams that developed the frameworks recognized the importance of international benchmarking and looked at academic expectations in other countries with high-achieving students. Also, the standards have been aligned with National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

Sincerely,

Pamela P. Pritchett

Pamela Pritchett
Senior Executive Assistant

South Dakota

Department of Education and Cultural Affairs

June 23, 1997

Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
AFT Educational Issues Department
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

I would like to take a moment to briefly respond to the "findings" you propose to include in your next AFT report on the progress of states' efforts in developing standards.

It appears to us that your office is attempting to apply a "one-size-fits-all" paradigm to the standards work of 50 very different states, and choosing to denigrate efforts which fall outside the lines of the AFT "cookie cutter." An approach which recognizes and celebrates diversity would seem more fitting for an organization which purports to be national in scope. As a professional organization, we find it presumptuous on the part of AFT to make assumptions about any state's standards *without an understanding of the policies, procedures and local control issues at the state level.*

The draft indicates that South Dakota's standards *are being developed* in core academic areas. In fact, the South Dakota Board of Education *has adopted* content standards in the following areas: communication/language arts, fine arts (music, drama, visual arts, and dance), world language, history, civics, geography, mathematics, science, and health. In addition, South Dakota is currently drafting physical education standards.

In each of these areas, our standards were developed through a broad inclusive process which solicited statewide input from educators at all levels as well as parents, community members and business persons. The writing teams were comprised of K-16 educators. It was their job to synthesize the input from South Dakota stakeholders, study all available national and state standards and, finally, to draft South Dakota standards based upon sound research and practice. Copies of the standards have been disseminated to all school districts in the state and substantial assistance has been provided as they develop curriculum and assessments for the standards/benchmarks in their local districts. As we 'put the content standards to work,' we will revise and refine them as we continually strive to provide quality education for all students in South Dakota.

Our standards, in fact, do not meet much of the AFT criterion because we developed our standards from different philosophical and definitional frames of mind. To illustrate these "definitional differences," please refer to the February 1996 monograph, *Issues in Brief: The Fall and Rise of Standards-Based Education*, written by Robert Marzano and John Kendall (McRel) and published by the National Association of State Boards of Education. Here, Kendall and Marzano point

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out that there are both CONTENT and CURRICULUM standards and they are not the same. A content standard "describes what students should know and be able to do; a curriculum standard describes what should take place in the classroom." (p.13)

Our standards are content standards, which in South Dakota are defined as "the critical knowledge and skills for all students to know and be able to do as a result of learning experiences in specific subject areas." (SDICS, 1994). It was our intent to set a framework of high expectations for all students, with standards which were "descriptive rather than prescriptive," thereby allowing the professional educators in local districts to determine the specific 'curriculum standards' which they would use to help their students meet the expectations outlined in the South Dakota Content Standards.

Lest you conclude that South Dakota has left teachers to their own devices regarding local curriculum development, let me quickly assure you that this agency is providing ongoing and unprecedented support for teams of educators from local districts. All-expenses-paid institutes are held regionally in order to facilitate access to current research, review of curriculum models, engagement in professional dialogue. Knowing that educators' review, revision, and development of local curriculum best occurs within a resource-rich professional environment, we have dedicated staff and fiscal support to "making it happen" for our state's largely rural education community.

Finally, the AFT draft refers to the *'claim'* that state officials make that new commercially developed assessments will be aligned with our benchmarks. An item-by-item comparison was completed between the complete battery of tests that will be given at all grade levels and *all* benchmarks, not merely the four core areas. The study revealed an alignment ranging between 64 percent and 100 percent. Just as it is stated in the 1997 *Making Standards Matter* draft that "strong standards should provide the basis for 60 to 80 percent of the academic curriculum" (p.3), South Dakota believes that the level of alignment between our benchmarks and commercially developed assessments allows for local flexibility in curriculum decisions. Additionally this documented high level of alignment will allow South Dakota to conduct assessments in all core subjects, for all students, in each grade span (elementary, middle, high school). Your draft states that "it is unfair and unrealistic for states to expect cash-strapped districts to develop their own assessments. . ." (p.8) We would contend that *it is unfair and unrealistic for AFT to expect cash-strapped states to develop their own assessments.*

Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to respond to your "findings," and you can be assured that we in South Dakota join you in the tireless dedication and commitment to providing quality education to all children.

Sincerely,

Karon L. Schaack
Secretary

cc: Dr. Margo Heinert, Ph.D.
Director: Division of Education Services & Resources

Texas

Editor's note: After receiving this letter, we obtained a new draft of the Texas English standards and changed our judgments. Those new judgments are now reflected on the state page.

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

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Mike Moses
Commissioner of Education

June 24, 1997

Mr. Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N. W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal,

Thank you for sending a draft of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) report on Texas from *Making Standards Matter 1997*. The Texas Education Agency appreciates the opportunity to respond.

In response to the section of the report on Standards, I am gratified to know that the draft Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in mathematics, science, and social studies meet the AFT criteria. The criteria, although not identical to those that I established for our 15 content-area writing teams, are reasonable and appropriate and are ones that I feel confident the teams also would be satisfied to meet.

Because the writing teams and the agency followed a single process and consistent guidelines across the content areas in developing the TEKS, it is difficult to understand why the draft TEKS for English Language Arts and Reading do not meet the same AFT criteria that the other three foundation subjects meet. I would like to comment on the English Language Arts and Reading TEKS in relation to each of your criteria.

1) "Standards must define in every grade or at designated grade-level benchmarks the common content and skills students should learn in each subject." The English Language Arts and Reading TEKS present both statements of knowledge and skills and statements of student expectations for every grade level, kindergarten through Grade 12. While, as the report states, some of these expectations are repetitive, it would seem from the criterion, which allows for grade clusters or benchmarks, that a certain degree of repetitiveness would be acceptable. Many statements are repeated deliberately, the premise being that students' skills increase as the texts with which they grapple increase in difficulty and sophistication. Indeed, given the recursive nature of learning and the fact that every child does not learn exactly the same material at the same date in the school year, it is admirable that the AFT allows for grade clusters in its criteria. Why would the AFT support such clustering in general but not in regard to the specific example of the Texas standards?

2) "Standards must be detailed and comprehensive enough to lead to a common curriculum." Please consider the following draft statements of student expectations at Grade 2: "The student is expected to write with more proficient spelling of regularly spelled patterns such as consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) (hop), consonant-vowel-consonant-

silent e (CVCe) (hope), and one-syllable words with blends (drop); [and]...write with more proficient use of orthographic patterns and rules including *qu* together, consonant doubling, drop *e* and change *y* to *i*." Given statements as precise as these, it is unlikely that the aspect of this criterion which Texas apparently failed to meet relates to detail.

In regard to comprehensiveness, the report states that, although reading is handled well in the early grades, there is not enough attention paid to literature in the upper grades. Revisions have been proposed since the mid-April draft of the TEKS, which the AFT staff used, which ensure that students are being read to and read classic and contemporary selections of literature. Students in English I and II read from world literature; students in English III read from American literature; and students in English IV read from British literature. Some of this explanation is available in the draft to which AFT staff was directed on June 20, 1997; the final draft, which will be submitted to the State Board of Education, will contain further detail, including eras of study. (Additional detail, such as book lists, would not be appropriate since selection of specific titles is a matter of local discretion.)

3) "Standards must be firmly rooted in the content of the subject area." The TEKS address listening/speaking, reading, writing, and viewing/representing as they relate to the English Language Arts both as a content area and as they serve other content areas. The explanation of this criterion refers to the level of complexity of literature, which I addressed above. The report did not comment on any other gap in the TEKS in regard to this criterion.

4) "Standards must be clear and explicit about the content students are expected to learn." Detail was addressed above. The report notes that some of the English Language Arts and Reading standards are hard to assess. I directed the writing team and staff to ensure that the TEKS are measurable. If the AFT has discovered TEKS that do not meet this mutual criterion, I would appreciate being informed of those.

5) "Standards that are organized on a course-by-course basis in high school must define the core courses that all students are expected to take." This criterion is met both in the TEKS and in other places in State Board of Education rule. The report did not comment on any gap in the TEKS in regard to this criterion.

In summary, the draft of the English Language Arts and Reading TEKS that AFT staff read meet most of the AFT criteria. Furthermore, the more recent draft, as well as the final draft that will be submitted to the State Board of Education, will surely meet all of the criteria. It is my hope that you will recognize this fact and note in the report that the Texas English standards are, in fact, "clear and specific enough."

We have enclosed a copy of your document with additional minor corrections and changes noted. Thank you again for the opportunity to review and respond.

Sincerely yours,

Mike Moses
Commissioner of Education

Vermont

STATE OF VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

June 23, 1997

Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to review your analysis of Vermont's academic standards and the related implementation processes. We appreciate AFT's efforts in monitoring the implementation of high academic standards, standards-based curricula and related assessments.

Vermont's *Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* was adopted by the State Board of Education in January of 1996, and local schools and school districts have been working since then to revamp district, school and classroom curricula based on the standards. Since then the Department of Education, along with many partner organizations, has actively supported the development of exemplary curricula based on the state's standards. One of our partners, The Vermont Institute for Science, Math, and Technology (VISMT), has worked with schools across the state in the implementation of standards-based curriculum materials funded by the National Science Foundation as one of Vermont's key strategies in the implementation of standards in mathematics and science.

We agree with many of the findings of your review. We have just begun our own formal review of the implementation of Vermont's framework of standards. Early feedback from schools implementing the standards indicates that the science and mathematics standards are the clearest, and most detailed. School leaders have told us that these standards together with the English/language arts standards have proven useful for developing strong, local curricula. We fully expect, however, to make adjustments to the standards over time. For example, teachers and school leaders have pointed out a need for adding more content detail to strengthen the standards for social studies and English/language arts.

Much of the detail that your review finds lacking was intentionally left out. From the beginning, it was made clear that Vermont's *Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* was not written as a statewide curriculum. A critical part of the implementation of a common core

curriculum is formal, local decision-making about specific content. This was important to the schools and communities of Vermont as the standards were developed and continues to be a key element in the development of challenging local curricula based on the state standards.

The organization of Vermont's standards into three grade level clusters (K-4, 5-8, 9-12) supports local decisions regarding grouping structures, such as multi-age classes and cross-grade teaming. This structure supports the role of local curriculum development, with local educators specifying the content based on the standards framework.

In November of 1996, the State Board of Education adopted a plan for a comprehensive assessment system based on the framework of standards. This system will include both local and statewide assessments. As the various components are developed and added, we expect to gain valuable information about the standards themselves and their impact on student and school performance.

The Vermont state legislature recently adjourned after one of the longest sessions on record. In response to a state supreme court decision that found the funding of education unconstitutional, Vermont's lawmakers enacted a new finance system designed to ensure that all students are prepared to contribute to a democratic society and to succeed in the global marketplace. The legislation requires the State Board of Education to implement and continually update student performance standards that are *challenging* and *rigorous*.

The new law also requires the State Board to continue its development of a comprehensive assessment system that will yield data to guide local and state decisions and planning. Another major provision of the law requires a variety of interventions based on student performance results, including academic and remedial interventions for students not meeting the standards.

The Vermont legislature also passed a law establishing a voluntary Academic Diploma, which is to be available to students in the year 2000-01. The intent of this differentiated diploma is to add a voluntary credential that recognizes high levels of achievement of rigorous and challenging standards as indicated by specific assessments.

Vermont has not made a final decision about participating in the national tests in mathematics and reading. As these assessments are developed, we will determine how well they "fit" into Vermont's standards, assessment and accountability system. (Vermont's Deputy Commissioner of Education is a member of the Mathematics Committee for the national test and will be able to effectively monitor the progress of its development.)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your analysis of Vermont's standards. We hope that your efforts lead to an ongoing and productive dialogue among all those who are developing standards to challenge America's students.

Sincerely,

Marc Hull

Marc Hull, Ph.D.
Commissioner

Diane Wolk

Diane Wolk, D.Ed.
Chair, State Board of Education

Virginia

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P. O. Box 2120
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RICHARD T. LA POINTE
Superintendent of Public Instruction

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June 25, 1997

Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 new Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment regarding the American Federation of Teachers'(AFT) publication, Making Standards Matter. As you know Virginia has launched an ambitious educational reform package designed to provide the Commonwealth's students with educational opportunities to prepare them to be competitive in the 21st century.

There are four components of Virginia's educational reform package: 1) rigorous standards in the four content areas; 2) assessments designed to assess those standards; 3) accreditation standards for schools which consider student performance on these standards in the accreditation decision; and, 4) a school performance report card to the public.

The AFT has reviewed our reform package and given Virginia high marks for its Standards of Learning(SOL). The Standards of Learning went through an elaborate review process in the Commonwealth before they were adopted by the Board of Education.

The Board is now engaged in a consultative review process of its Standards of Accreditation. I am confident that these processes of consultation and review will yield equally positive results, and that these initiatives will also merit the support of the AFT.

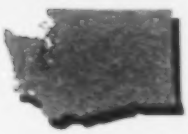
Sincerely,

Richard T. La Pointe

Richard T. La Pointe

RTL/pg

Washington



SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

DR. TERRY BERGESON OLD CAPITOL BUILDING • PO BOX 47200 • OLYMPIA WA 98504-7200

July 9, 1997

Matthew Gandal
Education Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide an update on the effort in Washington State to help all students achieve at higher levels.

High and Clear Standards

As your report *Making Standards Matter* shows, standards have been set in the four common core areas-- English (which, in our state, includes reading, writing and communication), mathematics, science and social studies. In addition, we have developed standards in the arts and health and fitness. These standards will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure clarity and relevance. Due to the complexity of social studies, a special effort is being made to assist teachers with planning and instruction to ensure a common core curriculum by providing supplemental materials. Overall, however, decisions about curriculum, instruction and how to assist students in their efforts to meet the standards are intentionally being left in the hands of local school districts.

Statewide Assessments

We are phasing in a comprehensive testing system to measure how well students and schools are meeting our state standards. This system includes rigorous tests at the 4th, 7th, and 10th grade levels, as well as classroom-based assessments to help teachers measure student progress over time and in a greater number of ways than is feasible with state-level tests.

This spring, 202 of Washington's 296 school districts sponsored workshops on the new 4th grade tests to give parents and community members a chance to see and tryout the new 4th grade tests for themselves. More than 90 of these districts sponsored their events simultaneously on the evening of March 26, the day proclaimed by our Governor to be "*Learn About Assessment Day.*"

Accountability
We are developing a statewide system for holding schools and school districts accountable for achieving our state standards, including:

- An assistance program to help schools and school districts that are having difficulty helping students meet the standards;
- An awards program to provide incentives to school staff to help their students meet the standards; and
- A system to intervene in schools and school districts in which significant numbers of students persistently fail to meet the standards.

Recommendations on this accountability system will be presented to our State Legislature in 1998, and we expect the system to be funded by 1999.

Student Promotion
Because we believe it is critical that local communities and school districts have authority and flexibility to tailor instructional programs around the state standards, decisions regarding retention and promotion of students remain at the local level. Some districts in our state have chosen to adopt exit requirements at the elementary and middle grade levels based on the state standards. The ultimate goal for all students to achieve will be to earn a Certificate of Mastery based on our state standards. Beginning in the year 2006, students will be required to successfully complete the state's high school assessment as well as local graduation requirements in order to receive a high school diploma.

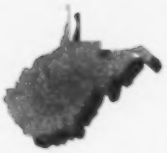
Thank you again for this opportunity to update you on our activities here in Washington State. It is always inspiring to read about the good work going on in other states as well in AFT's *Making Standards Matter* report. Across our nation, and certainly in the State of Washington, standards *do* matter, and our education system is rising to meet the challenges of a changing world and imperative of greater student achievement.

Sincerely,

Dr. Terry Bergeson

Terry Bergeson
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

West Virginia



WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Dr. Henry R. Marockie, State Superintendent of Schools
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June 27, 1997

Matthew Gandal
Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the AFT analysis of West Virginia's standards and assessment procedures. We are firm believers that by providing strong standards and assessment procedures our principals, teachers and parents know exactly what we expect students to know. The ratings in the *Quality Counts* report (where West Virginia scored higher than any other state) confirm that West Virginia has created the policy and support base for strong achievement by students.

Standards in all four core areas are now complete and, as the AFT analysis notes, provide a sound basis for a common core curriculum. The suggestion that the standards may be too comprehensive belies the fact that within the standards there is a designation of which standards will be assessed. That in itself provides guidance to teachers and parents as to the relative importance of the standards. In fact, having just completed the first year of using the new Stanford Achievement Test with all students in grades 1-11, we have been pleasantly surprised at the level of achievement across the state. As with the recently released NAEP scores in mathematics and science, West Virginia students are scoring at or above the national average in total basic skills.

We have worked hard to make certain that the two benchmarks for the school systems in West Virginia are attainable by our students. We want them to be at grade level in basic skills by the end of the fourth grade. Secondly, we want them to score at least at the 50th percentile on the Stanford in order to obtain a warranty for basic level skills for entry-level work positions (and at least at the 70th percentile if they are college bound).

Students who do not meet those two benchmarks must, as your analysis notes, be provided additional assistance in the basic skills. While there are some limited additional resources available for this purpose, including Title I funds, our position has been that it is entirely possible, within the existing personnel and resource allocated to schools, to provide that assistance. It may take some restructuring of instruction, but it can be done and is being done in many of our schools.

Sincerely,

Henry Marockie
State Superintendent of Schools

Wisconsin

State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction

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John T. Benson
State Superintendent

Steven B. Dold
Deputy State Superintendent

June 19, 1997

Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

When we received your analysis of Wisconsin's standards efforts and the excerpt from your report setting forth your evaluation criteria, we were pleased to see that you found our English language arts, mathematics, and science standards "clear and specific enough to lead to a common core curriculum." However, we would point out that policy decisions have been made by the governor, the Governor's Council on Model Academic Standards, and the state superintendent that there should be no state curriculum. Wisconsin has a long tradition of local control. We believe that our social studies standards serve the same purpose as those in the other three disciplines and we are working toward the kind of program envisioned by your criteria. When our standards are complete, we plan to align any assessments to them. We are considering various ways, including a graduation assessment, to provide incentive to do well. We are also very interested in academic intervention to improve student learning. However, we do not believe that any of these functions are completely the role of the state.

The issue of specificity in historical events, like that of specifying particular literary works in English language arts, reflects a conscious desire to allow local communities make these kinds of curricular decisions. While one could certainly add examples, we fear that the examples would soon come to be thought of as mandates that would narrow the curriculum for Wisconsin students.

The question of the number of subdisciplines in social studies has been debated during public engagement and within the task force that developed the standards. While this issue is not absolutely resolved, the task force has reached consensus. They believe that each of the subdisciplines is important and fear that, should some of them not be included in the standards, they will not be addressed in Wisconsin classrooms.

As you are undoubtedly aware, Wisconsin students do very well on all commonly used measures of student achievement. We believe that this is partly because of the tradition of local control, an excellent cadre of teachers, and a broad concept of what is important in education. In fact, in addition to the four areas in which we have state assessments and on which you focus in your analysis of standards, we have developed model academic standards in visual arts, music, theater, dance, health education, physical education,

foreign language, and family and consumer education. We are beginning a second round of standards development in environmental education, agriculture, marketing, technology education, and business education.

I appreciate the work that AFT has done to assemble information for the various states. It is good to know what educators in other areas are doing. I also appreciate the opportunity to respond to your analysis of our standards work.

Sincerely,

John T. Benson

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

JUDY CATCHPOLE
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Wyoming
Department of Education

June 29, 1997

Matthew Gandal, Assistant Director
Educational Issues Department
American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, N. W.
Washington, DC 20001-2079

Dear Mr. Gandal:

In regard to your inquiry concerning information on academic standards, assessments, accountability systems and technology in our state, our Legislature is in the process of responding to a recent Wyoming Supreme Court decision on equity of school funding. In their deliberations, the Legislature has attempted to use the opportunity to take a careful look at Wyoming public education and what will be needed to take our students successfully into the next century as workers and as citizens.

In the area of standards, the state presently requires local districts to set student performance standards for their districts with the participation of parents, community and staff. Most districts have pursued this process over the last six years and will complete the initial cycle this coming school year. Due to Title I requirements and to the recently passed (June, 1997) legislative requirements for uniformity, we are in the a process of setting state standards. These standards are being set using a bottom up approach that will build on the work already completed by districts. In response to accreditation requirements, school districts have set local student standards in defined Common Core of Knowledge and Skills areas with the participation of staff, community and parents. Districts will continue to use the standards they have developed, benchmarking them against the state standards to insure that they meet or exceed those standards.

These standards may then be used as the basis for any statewide assessment. Because we hope to focus the impact of the statewide assessment on continuous school improvement in student learning, we will measure in reading, writing and math. The recent state legislation school reform laws set up a state assessment design team to further study this areas. However, the legislation calls for assessment in reading, writing and math at grades 4, 8 and 11. Because the Wyoming Department of Education's multi-dimensional standards-based assessment proposal was not fully funded by the legislature, it is unclear what form that assessment will take. However, districts are required as a part of

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accreditation to measure student learning in all areas of our Common Core or Knowledge and Skills.

The accreditation process is at the heart of the accountability system presently in place in Wyoming. A statewide assessment in reading, writing and math would be used to further structure accountability and planning for school improvement. Local assessments in additional areas would provide a fully integrated accountability system. The Wyoming State Board of Education is required to set statewide improvement goals based on these and other data. These goals would guide the technical assistance and statewide staff development efforts of the Wyoming Department of Education. In the same manner, districts are required by the accreditation rules and regulations to set goals for improvement based on student learning results.

Technology is an area in which a great deal of planning is currently underway. Particularly in a rural state such as Wyoming, the delivery of equitable learning opportunities to students requires that distance learning and instructional technologies are available. The Department is currently working with districts and communities around the state to develop comprehensive community technology plans that will facilitate access to these learning opportunities. We anticipate that technology will become a critical piece in our accreditation process as well.

I am attaching relevant sections of the recently passed legislation as it addresses state standards and assessment. We are already in the midst of developing draft state standards in language arts and mathematics. If you have questions about this information, please contact Dr. Alan Sheinker, Division Administrator for Support Programs and Quality Results at (307) 777-6213 concerning assessment and technology. Please contact Dr. Jan Sheinker, Division Administrator for Program Improvement and Learning at (307) 777-6808 concerning standards and accountability systems. For updates on our progress, please check our world wide web page at http://www.k12.wy.us. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your efforts. We look forward to accessing the information you are assembling.

Sincerely,

Judy Catchpole

JC:js

Introducing the AFT's Series on Standards

Reaching High Standards

What are the elements of an education system that would enable educators to demand—and get—top academic performance from students? This booklet, derived from a resolution adopted by the AFT's 1996 national convention, describes four essential elements in constructing such a system—rigorous academic standards, assessments to measure student progress toward the standards, incentives for students to do the work that learning requires, and the opportunity for students to receive the extra help they might need to reach the standards. Five initiatives that educators can follow now, before comprehensive reforms are in place, are also included.

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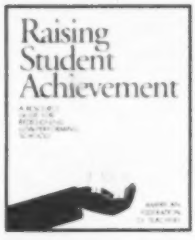
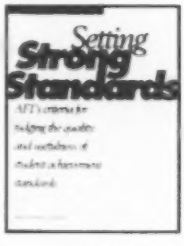


Item no. 370. Single copy $15; $10 each for five or more.

Setting Strong Standards

To help bring some clarity to the confused and often controversial issue of "standards," the AFT has developed a set of criteria for members and others to use in developing or reviewing student achievement standards. The criteria offer a clear vision to educators and policy makers at all levels of what useful standards should look like. The booklet includes excerpts of actual standards that illustrate many of the criteria.



Item no. 175. Single copy $2; $1 each for five or more.

Making Standards Matter 1997

Which states are working to develop higher academic standards? Which are making them clear and specific enough to be useful at the classroom level? How many are developing assessments linked to the standards? Which are planning to provide struggling students with the extra help they will need? How does your state measure up? This annual study offers a state-by-state progress report in these key areas.

Item no. 264. $10 each; $8 each for five or more.

Making Standards Count: The Case for Student Incentives

In this May 1994 address to the Brookings Institution, the late AFT president Albert Shanker warns that efforts to raise standards and improve U.S. education will fall short if we don't give students incentives to work hard in school by attaching consequences to academic achievement. The booklet includes excerpts from "*What College-Bound Students Abroad Are Expected To Know About Biology.*"

Item no. 20. Single copy $2; 85 cents each for two or more.

Reaching the Next Step: How School-To-Career Can Help Students Reach High Academic Standards and Prepare for Good Jobs

This policy report analyzes traditional school-to-career programs, and makes seven recommendations for "dramatically improving education for those students who have traditionally been left uninspired and unprepared by high school." Recommendations include a rich, high-quality curriculum; rigorous academic coursework in the core subjects; exposure to the work world, which brings relevance to academic work; and incentives for students to study and achieve.

Item no. 281. $5 each (for shipping and handling only).

Reaching the Next Step: A Resource Book for Educators

What does a high-quality school-to-career program look like? This resource book, which includes the above report, illustrates the AFT's school-to-career policy recommendations with detailed descriptions of four schools where successful

school-to-career programs have been implemented. Also included are sample course listings, standards, and exams.

Item no. 282. $10 each (for shipping and handling only).

Defining World Class Standards Series

These publications are designed to illustrate what other countries expect their students to know and be able to do in various subjects and at different grade levels.

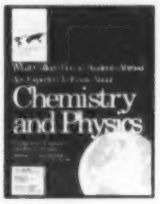
Vol. 1. What College-Bound Students Abroad Are Expected To Know About Biology—This book makes available for the first time actual biology exams taken by college-bound students in England and Wales, France, Germany, and Japan. It also includes scoring guides, sample answers, and a brief discussion of each country's education system, as well as the U.S. Advanced Placement biology exam. 120 pages.

Item no. 250. Single copy $10; $8 each for five or more.

Vol. 2. What Secondary Students Abroad Are Expected To Know: Gateway Exams Taken by Average-Achieving Students in France, Germany, and Scotland—This book contains gateway exams taken by average-achieving students at the end of 9th and 10th grade in France (French, Math, and History/Geography); Germany (German, English, and Math); and Scotland (English, Math, and Biology). It also includes a brief discussion of each country's school-to-work transition system and, for comparative purposes, the General Education Development (GED) practice test from the United States. 176 pages.

Item no. 251. Single copy $15; $12 each for five or more.

Vol. 3. What College-Bound Students Abroad Are Expected To Know About Chemistry and Physics—This book contains the actual translated chemistry and physics exams taken by college-bound students in England and Wales, France, Germany, and Japan, as well as scoring guides, sample answers, and the U.S. Advanced Placement exams. It also offers a brief overview of each nation's education system, plus a comparative look at how these different systems align their curricula, their exams, and their incentives. 157 pages.



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Vol. 4. What Students Abroad Are Expected To Know About Mathematics—This book presents the translations of mathematics exams taken by students in France, Germany, and Japan at two critical points in their educational careers: before entering high school and prior to entering college. The report also offers a brief overview of each nation's education system, plus a comparative look at how these different systems align their curricula, their exams, and their incentives. Also included are excerpts from the SAT I, SAT II, and Advanced Placement exams taken by U.S. students. The final chapter offers a comparative analysis of the examinations and student expectations in all four countries. 113 pages.

Item no. 253. Single copy $10; $8 each for five or more.

Setting World-Class Standards

These boxed kits, containing large collections of resources, are designed to help anyone involved in setting or reviewing standards (or developing curriculum) in the core academic subjects. Like the Defining World-Class Standards series, the standards kits show what other high-achieving countries expect their students to know and be able to do, and provide examples of rigorous and exemplary standards, curriculum and assessments from the U.S. The kits also include translated exams from abroad, materials from the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, grade-level guides from the Core Knowledge Foundation, examples of state and local standards, and materials from other organizations involved in setting standards. Each kit also provides important background materials on standards and systemic reform.

Setting World-Class Standards in English/Language Arts
$40 each.

Setting World-Class Standards in History, Civics, and Geography
$65 each.

Setting World-Class Standards in Mathematics
$50 each.

Setting World-Class Standards in Science
Main kit (focuses on K-12 science and includes exams, course guides, and scoring guidelines in high school biology), $65.

Supplemental kit (contains high school exams, course guides, and scoring guidelines in physics and chemistry), $35.

Price for both kits, $90.

Please note: Prices for all kits are based on discounted materials provided by publishers and cannot be guaranteed beyond June 1998.

Mail to: American Federation of Teachers Order Dept.
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